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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Twentieth Century Conquistadors:
Culture Clash and Caucho in the Upper Amazon

BY

Richard James Goulet

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 1993

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Twentieth Century Conquistadors: Culture Clash and Caucho in the Upper Amazon, submitted by Richard James Goulet in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Kenneth Munro
Chairman: K. J. Munro

20 April 1993

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of James (Jim) Barlow whose sudden passing in December 1990 was a great loss to all who knew him. His enthusiasm for historical studies, as a second career, was inspiring and his friendship as officemate was always full of good cheer. He is dearly missed.

ABSTRACT

The rubber boom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced a "black gold" rush in the Amazon basin. In more isolated areas, like the Putumayo River of the upper Amazon, the Peruvian Amazon Company, a British company run by Peruvians, used force and terror to induce the native population to collect rubber. While investigations into the atrocities have made the situation in the Putumayo seem somewhat unique, it is clear that violence in the area was representative of a larger problem throughout the Amazon. Moreover, not only was the use of force prevalent in other areas of the Amazon but the systems of oppression and mechanisms of domination were well in place in the Upper Amazon well before the rubber era. An examination of the early missionary activities in the area in the 17th and 18th centuries reveals that the use of the lash and stocks, as well as actively searching for and capturing Indians to fill the missions, was common practice. This continuity in the use of force was symptomatic of the underlying problem between the whites and the Indians: that is, be they missionaries or rubber merchants, once the Indians acquired enough useful trade goods they were often no longer interested in maintaining close relations with whites. The white intruders tried to impress upon the Indians foreign ideas of economy which did not fit the Indians' culture or world view. Having developed a culture within the confines of the environment in which they lived, "white" ideas held little relevance for them. Unfortunately, the attempts to "conquer and civilize" the Indians by the "whites" lead to an often bloody clash of cultures.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1909, Truth, the organ of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigine Protection Society of London published a series of reports based on the experiences of Walter E. Hardenburg, an American who had just returned from a trip to South America. What Hardenburg recounted was a tale of horror and savagery from the jungles of the Upper Amazon basin, in which the natives of the area were beaten, tortured and mutilated to force them to collect rubber for the Peruvian Amazon Company, a Peruvian operated but British capitalized limited liability company. What several London papers refused to publish for fear of costly libel suits, Truth printed and began a process which would last for several years. The story of the Putumayo would create a sensational scandal in London and would be the subject of several books; produce commissions of enquiry by the governments of Great Britain, the United States and Peru; and regularly be in the major newspapers of three continents. Until the outbreak of World War I, few, if any, events were such an affront to the ideals of Western civilization. In order to understand better what happened in this area of jungle in South America it is necessary to review the historiography of the events that occurred in the so-called "Devil's Paradise."

Perhaps the best place to start this discussion is with the publication of Hardenburg's own book, The Putumayo: The Devil's Paradise, which was published in 1912. Hardenburg's narrative reads like a sensational travel account which "evokes grotesque and melodramatic ritual as an organic part of the rubber boom warfare along

this unhappy stretch of the Putumayo river."[1] An engineer, Hardenburg and his friend W.B. Perkins had been working on the Cauca Railroad in Colombia with the American firm, Mason and Co., when in June of 1907, they left the project intending to visit the Putumayo river hoping to invest in the rubber industry if the opportunity presented itself.[2] What Hardenburg and Perkins experienced was a whole lot more than the two young adventurers had bargained. While first coming upon Colombian caucheros who treated them well, they then proceeded to get caught in the middle of a rubber war between the Colombian caucheros and those who worked for the powerful British-Peruvian rubber syndicate, the Peruvian Amazon Company.[3] Imprisoned and mistreated by the Peruvians, Hardenburg and Perkins lost all their belongings but felt lucky to escape with their lives.

Hardenburg's book recounts his experiences in the realm of the Peruvian caucheros and is a vivid descriptive narrative of the atrocities inflicted upon the indigenous peoples of the area. While the Colombian caucheros were models of patriarchal benevolence and Hardenburg's

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[1] Michael Taussig, Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 30.

[2] See G. Sidney Paternoster's The Lords of the Devil's Paradise, (London: Stanley Paul and Co., 1913), 43.

[3] The term cauchero, refers to people involved in the collection and selling of caucho, the type of rubber extracted from the trees of the genus Castilloa, as opposed to seringeros, who collected and sold seringe which came from the more productive Hevea rubber genus, more common in Brazil. The term cauchero did not refer to the natives that actually extracted the rubber from the trees but the people who were involved in collecting it from the natives and then transporting it and selling it down the river. As José A. Flores Marín points out in his La Explotación del caucho en el Perú, (Lima: Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 1987), caucheros were not colonists per se, but rather adventurers who were interested in exploiting an area, which involved cutting the rubber tree down to extract the caucho, and moving on. See pages 26-28.

friends, the Peruvians were fiends treating "their" natives as animals according to Hardenburg. It is important to note, as Michael Taussig does, that

> most of the power of Hardenburg's revelations came not from what he himself experienced or saw at first hand but from what he took from accounts published in two short-lived Iquitos 'newspapers,' La Sanción and La Felpa, created especially, so it appears, to attack Arana and his company's doings.[4]

Hardenburg also used witnessed letters from ex-employees of Julio C. Arana's Peruvian Amazon Company.[5] These sources were important for Hardenburg "because they were not merely local and hence 'authentic' but also because they objectified word-of-mouth rumor in print. Furthermore, such accounts gave his limited and fragmented personal experience a wider, even overall view."[6] Although it seems, at least

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[4] Taussig, Shamanism, 32. "Arana" refers to Julio Cesar Arana, who was the founder and president of J.C. Arana y Hermanos (and Brothers), which became the Peruvian Amazon Company in 1907. The company, along with its various subsidiaries which were usually amalgamations with smaller rubber companies, is often referred to in the literature as "la Casa Arana." Little information is available about the editor, Benjamín Saldaña Rocca, of La Sanción, later called La Felpa. Richard Collier in his book, The River that God Forgot: The Story of the Amazon Rubber Boom, (London: Collins, 1968) has this to say: "Both journalist and printer, he was in truth a small-town scandal-sheet proprietor who, since July, 1907, had been waging a one-man war against Arana's firm. His attacks took the form of random news-sheets, called either La Felpa or La Sanción, printing testimonies from former employees up the Putumayo. 'Some say he was a Colombian agent,...whatever he was, the company no sooner fired somebody than he'd go to Rocca who rushed into print with a story.'" 120. Due to the nature of Collier's book, which is discussed later, it is impossible to verify the truth of these statements. It seems that Rocca ran the paper for about seven months and then left for Lima where he began work for the left leaning paper, La Prensa. See Collier, 137.

[5] According to Collier, The River, "Only two of the witnesses could legally be counted as deponents - that is, had sworn their statements before a notary public." 141.

[6] Taussig, Shamanism, 32. It seems Hardenburg witnessed first hand only his own mistreatment and that of his Colombian companions

according to the editor of Truth, G. Sidney Paternoster, that Hardenburg desired no monetary benefit for his story published by Truth, being described as possessing a "burning hatred of oppression and a youthful zeal for the punishment of the oppressor,"[7] the intentions of his sources are less easy to verify. Ex-employees and other people out of favour with the Peruvian Amazon Company may have found it to their benefit if the Company lost its hold in the Putumayo area.

Despite its novel-like quality and the fact the book came out after the public had been sufficiently primed by the press as to the sensational quality of the atrocities, Hardenburg does identify some of the aspects of the Putumayo which help explain the atrocities. Although he too severely singles out the Peruvians, he does point out that the Putumayo was a disputed area between Peru and Colombia (and Ecuador) and the presence of a Peruvian company in the area helped establish Peruvian claim to the area. Having just worked for a Colombian company, his favoritism toward the Colombians is understandable. He refers to the Peruvians in the area as a "handful of miserable, half-breed outlaws who take advantage of their autocratic authority over the helpless Huitotos,"[8]

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by the Peruvian Amazon Company. They were captured during a raid by a launch of the company and one of Peruvian soldiers sent by the Government of Peru. While they were handled roughly there was no way for the Peruvians to know that he was not in the employ of the Colombian rubber company which they were fighting and who were debtors to the Peruvian Amazon Company. The atrocities that Hardenburg goes into great detail describing are based on information he acquired from Indians he talked to and statements he collected in Iquitos. While describing Indians in poor physical condition with lash marks on their bodies, it seems he witnessed none of the atrocities himself. See Hardenburg, 172-185.

[7] Paternoster, The Lords, 42.

[8] W.E. Hardenburg, The Putumayo: The Devil's Paradise, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), 186. The Huitotos were the main indigenous group in the area under discussion.

and sees little hope of the Peruvian authorities rectifying the situation. He describes the authorities of the Department of Loreto as operating within "an unparalleled system of wholesale bribery...(and who) do absolutely nothing to put a stop to this state of affairs."[9] There is a tone of immediacy to Hardenburg's language, however, which belies the historical reality of the situation in the Putumayo. He laments the fact that there are no priests in the area to properly "civilize" the Indians, and that with a few more roads, extraction and production of forest products would greatly enhance immigration, industry and the "civilizing" of the area.[10] He does not see the intrinsic danger of exactly these types of forces and their influence in creating the conditions that so horrified him. Although Hardenburg laments the fact that no priests were in the area to help "civilize" the natives, based on historical precedent, this fact was not so lamentable. The "civilizing" effect of immigrant whitemen and their ideas of industry or work were precisely the forces that helped create systems of exploitation, that were often perpetuated by force and terror.

Hardenburg also writes from a culturally superior point of view, seeing the Indians of the area as rather child-like and needing of protection or they might disappear. He describes them as a noble race and "peaceful, industrious Indians, quite capable of civilisation and Christianity."[11] These words harken back to some of the earliest descriptions since Columbus of Indians of the "New World".[12]

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[9] Hardenburg, The Putumayo, 197.

[10] See pages 69 and 163 in Hardenburg, The Putumayo.

[11] Hardenburg, The Putumayo, 198.

[12] The words of Christopher Columbus on October 12, 1492, the day of his first landfall, are most interesting concerning the native inhabitants of San Salvador: "They ought to be good servants and of good skill,...I believe that they would easily be made Christians, because it seemed to me that they belonged to no religion." It is amazing that

Hardenburg, like the Peruvians, saw the Indians as a potential workforce who through useful production of marketable goods would become civilized and the necessary corollary, Christianized. C. Reginald Enock, Hardenburg's editor and an adventurer and engineer in Peru for many years, exhibits a similar air of superiority in his introduction of Hardenburg's book. He goes even further in his denunciation of the Peruvians attributing the atrocities largely to their "Iberian" character. He states that "other European people may have abused the Indians of America, but none have that peculiar Spanish attitude towards them of frankly considering them as non-human."[13] He goes on to say that the "love of inflicting agony for sport is a curious psychic attribute of the Spanish race."[14] While racism cannot be denied as a factor in many acts of colonialism, Enock's own racism is only too well revealed in his explanation for the use of Barbadians as labour overseers in the Putumayo.[15] While arguing that the Barbadians were forced at their own peril to flog natives and commit even worse atrocities, he goes on to state: "But probably the savage depth of the negro is easily stirred, as all know who have had dealings therewith. There can be little doubt that the Peruvian rubber-agents knew the negro character and secured them for that reason."[16] It is rather a convenient oversight on Enock's part to

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similar sentiments would be expressed over 400 years later concerning Amazonian tribes. Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., Journals and Other Documents on the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus, (New York: The Heritage Press, 1963), 65.

[13] Hardenburg, The Putumayo, 37.

[14] Hardenburg, The Putumayo, 38.

[15] In 1904, Over 190 Barbadians were hired to work for the Casa Arana in the Putumayo. Most of them worked as overseers of native workers and many of them committed or were forced to commit atrocities against the native people.

[16] Hardenburg, The Putumayo, 39-40.

forget about the atrocities in the Belgian Congo, an area not imbued with the "immorality" of Iberian blood.[17]

Despite Enock's moralistic tone, he does mention a few more factors which need to be considered when trying to explain the Putumayo atrocities. He speaks of the isolation of the region from the central government in Lima, a government which is constantly torn by political strife and tends to neglect its outlying regions, particularly those on which it has only an insecure hold. He argues that despite being well-intentioned the central government was dealing with a hopelessly corrupt local government which, due to poor communications, was extremely difficult to overcome. While admiring the Peruvians' drive to conquer the area and admitting that they were "alive to its value and possibilities," he points out the difficulties involved in subduing the jungle and, by extension, its inhabitants by a poor country like Peru.[18] Enock also lays a modicum of blame on complacent share-holders who reaped dividends due to the mistreatment of native labour, the worst abuse of absentee capitalism.

For Enock, the two-fold remedy for the area was the planting of rubber trees (proven unviable in later years) and the re-establishment of missions in the area that would be "prepared to exercise a more or less 'muscular' kind of Christianity."[19] While he distrusted the moral

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[17] The atrocities in the Belgian Congo began in the 1890s and were themselves investigated by Roger Casement in 1903. The atrocities, occurred within territories controlled by concessionary companies granted by the King of Belgium and "Iberians" were not involved. For a bit of background and comment on Casement's report see Brian Inglis, Roger Casement, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), 21-90.

[18] Hardenburg, The Putumayo, 34-36.

[19] Hardenburg, The Putumayo, 52. "Muscular" Christianity was a common feature of early twentieth century evangelical protestantism, often associated with the Social Gospel movement and strongly

character of priests and the "petty idolatry" of the Roman Church, he felt that Protestant missions might get a toe-hold in the isolated area of the Amazon. What is clear, however, is that like Hardenburg, Enock saw the basic need to "civilize" the Indians by imbuing them with a "western" set of economic and religious values they did not need, want or understand. This was something the Peruvians were at least partially doing already.

The next writer to deal with the atrocities was G. Sidney Paternoster, who worked for Truth for 22 years. In his book, The Lords of the Devil's Paradise, the reform-minded Paternoster points the finger of blame at the guilty and honours those, namely Hardenburg and Truth, who have brought the atrocities to light. Paternoster lays the greatest blame on the Peruvian caucheros who developed a system of slavery and abuse and had "no intention of dwelling longer in the forest than the accumulation of the wealth they hoped to amass necessitated."[20] Like Hardenburg (which is not surprising since Hardenburg is Paternoster's primary source), Paternoster argues that the system on the Putumayo was developed by the Peruvian criminals, stating that "it is questionable whether there was anything like an organised system of forced labour. Probably there was a great deal of bloodshed, but probably then, as to-day (sic), the Colombians generally treated the natives with a certain

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influenced by ideas of social reform. In his fascinating book, Brazil and the Struggle for Rubber: A Study in Environmental History, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Warren Dean convincingly argues that the failure of rubber plantations in Brazil and the whole Amazon basin was due to biological factors, in particular the fungus Microcyclus ulei, which was not transplanted to the Far Eastern plantations which displaced South American rubber in the second decade of the twentieth century. See 163-168.

[20] Paternoster, The Lords, 29.

amount of kindness."[21] On the whole, Paternoster views the caucheros as money hungry sadistic criminals who see themselves as conquistadors of peoples (i.e. the different native groups) who while at constant war with each other are, nonetheless, "averse to bloodshed, and (are) thoughtless rather than cruel."[22]

Paternoster also condemns the Peruvian government for not having done anything despite being aware of the atrocities as early as 1903, and for being delinquent in their duty in bringing the culprits to justice and reforming the system of labour and administration in the area. He attributes this negligence to the isolation of the area, the instability of the central government, the savage and fever-ridden nature of the area, the limitations of the national treasury and, of course, the indolent nature of Peruvians: "What is the matter with the country? Part of it, particularly the government class, suffers from the inevitable moral atrophy of a white and hybrid race born and bred at sea level near the Equator."[23] Like Hardenburg and Enock, Paternoster fails to see the institutionalized nature of exploitation in the Amazon and self-righteously attributes the atrocities to some type of racial flaw in Peruvians. The atrocities committed in the Putumayo can be seen as a continuation of the type of force used against the Indians of the Upper Amazon area since first contact with whitemen. While the degree of brutality may have varied from place to place and through time, depending on specific

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21 Paternoster, The Lords, 31. This "certain amount of kindness" varied greatly from place to place and, as I will argue later, was a type of kindness laced with threats and often the use of force.

22 Paternoster, The Lords, 23.

23 Paternoster, The Lords, 323. The words are those of Lieutenant-Colonel H. Fawcett from the Manchester Guardian as quoted by Paternoster who clearly agrees with them.

circumstances, the type of relationship between whites and natives, between two very different cultures, has maintained many common features.

Paternoster also blames the Board of Directors for being culpably ignorant of the conditions of operation of their company and congratulates Truth for saving Britain's national honour by exposing these atrocities and keeping the issue in the public eye in order to put pressure on the British and Peruvian governments to right these wrongs. It is important, therefore, for Paternoster to have a clearly identifiable target for the purpose of his writing. That is to say, Paternoster is writing in order to correct a heinous injustice and therefore it is necessary to have a clear object for correction: primarily, the criminals themselves, who take up most of the book's space; secondarily, the negligent Peruvian government; and finally, the British Board members who were more interested in how much money the company was making and not how it was making it. His would be a more difficult task if he looked past the immediate personages of exploitation into the more deeply entrenched psyche and system of exploitation and conquest.

Another English source written with a reformist bent is Norman Thomson's Putumayo Red Book. This book is clearly intended to effect reforms in the Putumayo by resolving to suspend rubber shipments from the area until the boundary dispute between Colombia and Peru is over. Using the Colombian Vicente Olarte Camacho's book, Las crueldades de los peruanos en el Putumayo y en el Caquetá, as one its main sources, it is not surprising that Thomson sees the area as Colombian and therefore

sees the Peruvians as the villains.[24] It is a book, however, that deals little with the nature of white/native interaction.

One of the most important primary sources for Paternoster and, for that matter, Hardenburg, is what became known as the Putumayo Blue Book. This is the record of "Correspondence respecting the treatment of British Colonial Subjects and Native Indians employed in the Collection of Rubber in the Putumayo District" compiled by Roger Casement, Consul at Rio de Janiero, sent out to investigate the allegations of atrocities in 1910. Casement had also been responsible for a similar investigation in the Congo about a decade earlier. Based on his own observations and the testimony of thirty blacks from Barbados, the British subjects whose well-being and safety was the stated excuse for the investigation, Casement verified the atrocities as described by Hardenburg and attempted to make sense of the horror to his superior, Foreign Office minister Sir Edward Grey. Although Casement summarized most of the testimony in his own words, he believed that cross-checking testimony of the illiterate witnesses would lead him to the truth. The truth was clearly evident and horrifying. Hundreds, if not thousands, of natives had been beaten, burned, flogged, drowned, hung and worse if they did not collect a specified amount of rubber in a specified time.[25]

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[24] Norman Thomson, The Putumayo Red Book, (London: N. Thomson and Co., 1913). Unfortunately, Camacho's book was unavailable to me but judging by its title (The Cruelties of the Peruvians in the Putumayo and Caquetá) and the tone of some of the quotations used in other sources, it seems to be largely political in nature, designed to demonstrate the heinous crimes of the Peruvians in order to discredit their claim of the area in favour of Colombia.

[25] The veracity of the Barbadian testimony can be challenged. Some Spanish writers resort to racial arguments but a more convincing argument would be that the Barbadians, clearly guilty themselves of

Casement's explanation of the atrocities, correctly pointed out by Michael Taussig, had to be in such a way in "which the Foreign Office felt familiar, the market-price way of understanding social events, political economy as official common sense."[26] Since the Foreign Office was most interested in the potential economic possibilities of foreign countries for British capital, Casement's report fit its economic mode of inquiry and understanding. Despite contradictions in the official report, contradictions which Taussig argues exhibits Casement's own "hunted" persona as an Irishman and homosexual, the conclusions of the report had to be

> dependent on market rationality to produce the following type of argument: It was not rubber but labor that was scarce in the Putumayo. This scarcity was the basic cause of the terror. Putumayo rubber was of the lowest quality, its remoteness made its transport expensive relative to most other rubber zones, and wages on the open market were very high. Hence the company coerced labor by means of debt-peonage and terror.[27]

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crimes, would be better off blaming their employers for the atrocities, who they said forced them to kill Indians or be killed themselves, and make themselves out to be victims also. The fact that the Barbadians were in debt to the Peruvian Amazon Company and, due to their testimony, were cleared of their debts and taken out of the area by Roger Casement might lend some credence to this argument. While it is probable that some of the Barbadians were forced to do things against their will the number of killings (estimated in the thousands) is probably an exaggeration. Many Indians were abused and many were killed but many more were probably lost due to disease or were never found again after fleeing. For an example of a Spanish speaker who certainly does not see the Barbadians as innocent victims see Carlos Rey de Castro, Los pobladores del Putumayo, (Barcelona: Imp. Vda. de Luis Tasso, 1914), 51. Rey de Castro's opinion must also be taken with a grain of salt as he was Consul of Peru in Manaus and closely associated with the Casa Arana at this time.

[26] Taussig, Shamanism, 53.

[27] Taussig, Shamanism, 53. Taussig's analysis of Casement's report is both interesting and convincing. While his "hunted persona" syndrome of Casement might be stretched, his discussion about the use

Casement gave reasons to the Foreign Office why the atrocities had occurred in this particular area of the Amazon basin. While citing the area's isolation and difficulty of transport as other reasons, he believed the same area could be worked efficiently if only the Indians were given more and better goods. Although avoiding the more ethnocentric insinuations of other writers like Hardenburg and Paternoster that the area could be exploited in a humane and civilized manner if controlled by the British or Americans, Casement, like them, totally missed the fact that the area contained a surprising abundance of natives. It was not the shortage of labour so much as the shortage of appropriate labour that was the problem. This was a socio-political and cultural issue, not a demographic one.[28] But it was important for Casement to make "sense" of the terror, giving rational explanations based on political economy and "isolate the means of terror in the rubber boom from their history and wider cultural context."[29] It is to examine the history and wider cultural context of the area and its people which is essential for a better understanding of the atrocities Casement was trying to explain.

Another important primary source utilized by many writers is the proceedings of the Select Committee of the House of Commons set up to determine the guilt of the British Board members of the Peruvian Amazon Company. Its conclusions basically found the directors culpably

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of terror in the Putumayo is fascinating and will be discussed later in this chapter.

[28] Taussig, Shamanism, 54. While Taussig makes the point about the inappropriateness of native labour he does little in the way of discussing why this was so, which is one of my major concerns. Taussig is more interested in the dynamic between colonial terror and the way Indians respond through healing ritual, touching only peripherally on some of the larger cultural questions about modes of labour and relations to land.

[29] Taussig, Shamanism, 41, 53-54.

ignorant of the affairs of their company but due to this ignorance they were exonerated of any criminal behaviour. The committee blamed the system of labour set up by Arana and implemented by men of little education and even less character to be the cause of all the evils. The commission system, or payment of section chiefs based on a percentage of the rubber collected was deemed the "root of the problem." With better communications to the isolated area and proper inspections it was concluded that the natives of the area, particularly the Boras, would make splendid labourers.[30]

Although the Committee was aware that the "ill-treatment of the Indians (was) not confined to the Putumayo...(and) the spirit of the conquistador appears to be at work on other rivers," they were more concerned with how these atrocities affected the laws concerning trade of goods produced by slavery and the Company Law, rather than the underlying causes of oppressive systems of labour in the tropics.[31] While sincerely interested in seeing that British trade did not lead to these sorts of conditions again, they suggested a systemic change no more drastic than allowing for paid consulates, rather than trading consuls with small honorariums, like David Cazes, former British Consul

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[30] True to the liberal ideas of the times concerning working conditions and workers' quality of work, namely the better the conditions and wages the happier and better the worker, the members of the Select Committee certainly thought the same would hold true with native workers. The Boras were often used as types of overseers and were instrumental in helping find and recapture runaway Indians, usually Huitotos, with whom the Boras were unfriendly. These Indians were called muchachos, and will be discussed later. It seems that since the Boras were the most integrated into the white system of labour they promised to become the best workers.

[31] House of Commons Sessional Papers, "Report and Special Report from the Select Committee on Putumayo," 1913, vol. 14, 19-20.

at Iquitos who was also agent of the Booth Shipping Co. - the shippers who brought Putumayan rubber to Liverpool.

The last major primary source in English to deal with the labour system in the Putumayo is a collection of letters and reports compiled by the American Consul at Iquitos, Peru during 1911-12, and submitted to Congress February 7, 1913 as Slavery in Peru.[32] This is a valuable source as it contains both observations by the consuls themselves and translations of reports and enquiries made by Peruvian officials. While giving a sense of the local atmosphere and opinion over the reports of atrocities and the subsequent investigations it varies little from the British sources in its focus and concern for reforms in the area. Reforms in the system of rubber production and also in the legal and administrative system of the department of Loreto, Peru are seen as the remedy for the area's bad reputation. Some ethnographic information about the different Indian groups is presented but no attempt is made to connect the "ways" or culture of the Indians to the problems they experienced when dealing with the white caucheros.

The Spanish sources about the incidents in the Putumayo area vary greatly in their intent and interpretation. Although published only in 1943, Un año en el Putumayo by Father Alberto Gridilla, a Peruvian Franciscan sent into the area with English Franciscans, recounts his experiences in the area from the end of 1912. His book is a memoir based on a lost diary which leads one to consider his words carefully.

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[32] The complete title is Slavery in Peru, "Message from the President of the United States transmitting Report of the Secretary of State, with Accompanying Papers, concerning the Alleged Existence of Slavery in Peru", 62nd Congress, 3rd Session, Document no. 1366, Vol. 3, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913). All subsequent reference to this work will be indicated by Slavery in Peru.

Gridilla admits that abuses occurred in the past but states that they were caused by the "commission" system and this having been changed ended all abuses. He describes a new system where the Indians "in work, were entirely free, and the occupation of collecting rubber each day was more a passtime than work."[33] This is in direct contradiction of reports being received by both American and British Foreign ministries. Gridilla found the Indians well treated and, what is more, debt-free! While it may be that Gridilla is trying to brighten Peru's image, it is interesting to note that Gridilla spent a whole year in the Putumayo area not long after the worst atrocities were committed and, according to some, were still being committed. This is longer than any of the previous sources could claim to have been in the area. The tone of Gridilla's book is also instructive. He is very matter-of-fact about the previous atrocities and refers to the natives in the area as "esclavos" (slaves) and "eran todos salvajes" (they were all savages). This type of language and his views of the Indians' worth and treatment gives us one example of a modern Peruvian attitude toward the indigen of the forest.

Another even less objective Peruvian wrote in 1913 in an attempt to not only clear his own name but that of Arana and Peru as a whole. Carlos Rey de Castro, Peruvian Consul at Manaus at the time of the atrocities, wrote Los escándalos del Putumayo, in an attempt to besmirch all those who had anything bad to say about how Peruvians were collecting rubber in the Putumayo. Calling the Americans imperialists, the Colombians land grubbing opportunists, Sir Edward Grey a political

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[33] Padre Alberto Gridilla, O.F.M., Un año en el Putumayo: Resumen de un Diario, (Lima, 1943), 32-33. "En el trabajo, eran enteramente libres, y la ocupación de recoger las lágrimas de goma, cada día, mas que trabajo era un pasatiempo."

opportunist, Sir Roger Casement a megalomaniac, Hardenburg a blackmailer and the negro Barbadians the real criminals and abusers of the "savage" Indians, Rey de Castro tries to defend himself and the Peruvian Amazon Company of all allegations.[34] While it is clear in various sources that Rey de Castro had a close and mutually beneficial relationship with Arana, it is difficult to put much stock in his analysis of the subject, but his book is instructive of the attitude of one close to the action.

El proceso del Putumayo sus secretos inaúditos, by Carlos A. Valcárcel is probably the most telling source written by a Peruvian. Writing in 1915, Judge Valcárcel, despite being relieved of his duties for seemingly trying to bring some of the criminals to justice, had a strong conviction that the truth about the Putumayo should be known. His account covers mostly the judicial enquiry into the atrocities and its failure to successfully prosecute the criminals. He feels that the protection offered the criminals by the church and by corrupt local officials should not be hidden through a false sense of patriotism. While he sees problems with the evidence of the black Barbadians as collected by Roger Casement, he does not deny the crimes committed by Peruvians and sees the criminals' freedom as a product of the negligence and corruption of local authorities, the silence of the Supreme Court and the intervention of the President. His book is also a wholesale denunciation of the attempts of those, like Rey de Castro, who tried to confuse the issue with false statements.[35]

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[34] Carlos Rey de Castro, Los escándalos del Putumayo, (Barcelona: Imprenta Vda. de Luis Tasso, 1913), 65-68.

[35] Carlos A. Valcárcel, El proceso del Putumayo y sus secretos inaúditos, (Lima: Imprenta "Comercial" de Horacio La Rosa & Co., 1915), 309-319.

In 1928, another missionary, Capuchin Father Gaspar de Pinell wrote another memoir of his visit to the area. Pinell was Colombian and his interest in the area as a Colombian domain is fairly obvious. His historical narrative is more often interested in exploring the rivalries that existed between the Colombian and Peruvian caucheros than the atrocities committed by both. His view of the Indians is highly paternalistic and his discussion of the atrocities is so brief that one wonders at their seeming lack of importance. It is clear that Pinell was interested in "civilizing" the Indians and it seems he does not feel it necessary to differentiate his feelings toward the natives from those of the caucheros.

Generally, therefore, the contemporary Spanish sources tend to be rather defensive in nature and, excepting Valcárcel, lack the tone of moral outrage over the atrocities. And even with Valcárcel, he seems more outraged over the cover-up and lack of action on the part of the government to punish the criminals than perhaps the atrocities themselves. Why the difference in tone of the two types of sources? How much can differences in cultural and social milieu explain attitudinal, value and even moral differences? Was the Putumayo system of exploitation unique in the eyes of those Latin Americans familiar with the well entrenched ways of the forest and whose attitudes towards the natives was at least slightly different from those visitors from across the sea?

Little about the Putumayo atrocities was written after 1915, probably English writers were occupied with the happenings of wartime and Peruvian writers probably felt the less said the better. The next discussion of the subject came with the fairly comprehensive study of the

rubber industry as a whole by Howard and Ralph Woif in 1936. RUBBER: A Story of Glory and Greed identifies the Putumayo as perhaps the best, or at least most well known example of the type of exploitation meted out by men who established their own fiefdoms in order to make their bundle of money and leave. While they offer few other specific examples and clearly blame Arana and other originators of the system of death they invented, they hold as well a paternalistic attitude toward the "docile" and childlike Indians. They portray the suitable moral outrage at the abuses of the system and the fact that the authorities were cognizant of the atrocities at an early date but did nothing to stop them; however, like others before them they fail to see the historical continuity between the excesses of the rubber boom period in the Upper Amazon and the previous processes and attitudes toward the natives in the area.

The next treatment of the subject is also rather light in analytic weight. Richard Collier's The River that God Forgot, while despite its subtitle, The Story of the Amazon Rubber Boom, is really a novelesque history of the Arana empire. Claiming to have utilized information derived from personal memorabilia of key participants and from archives in Spanish and Portuguese only available in the Amazon area, Collier has decided to dispense with all notes and bibliography. While the book contains many interesting "facts" about the rubber kingdom of Arana, it is difficult to assess due to its unscholarly format. What is clear, however, is that the root of the Putumayo occurrences, according to Collier, lies at the feet of Julio C. Arana. Described as a man who spent his life in the jungle while hating it and who had warped his soul due to his self-imposed burden of power and corruption, Collier sees Arana as

the key to this system of exploitation, despite his admitting of similar systems elsewhere in the upper Amazon.[36]

Since Collier's book, which was published in 1968, there have been a few, more substantial works dealing with issues of rubber extraction in the Putumayo and the Amazon basin as a whole. Analytically more complicated, two of these have placed the infamy of the Putumayo atrocities within a larger institutional context. Jean Piel, in "Le Caoutchouc, La Winchester et L'Empire," argues that the incidents in the Putumayo area were, like those in the Congo, merely a product of the capitalism countries like Britain were bound to create in their search for products and markets. While admitting some international circles began to inform against these abuses of tropical labour after 1910, the onslaught of war and cheaper plantation rubber caused these concerns to dissipate.[37] It is quite clear, however, that he does not get into any detailed discussion about the relationship between the system of labour exploitation used and indigenous culture.

Barbara Weinstein in her 1983 book, The Amazon Rubber Boom, is more concerned with the managerial and organizational structures of the rubber industry in the Amazon and how it was a product of the well entrenched aviador system of exchange established in the Amazonian

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[36] Collier, The River that God Forgot, 55. Collier talks about men who set up areas of influence and "were monarchs more absolute than most Eastern kings." He also mentions an operation on the Madre de Dios River which was "a stud farm which kept 600 Indian slave girls for breeding purposes." Nicolas Suárez, Bolivian rubber baron of 16 million acres on the Beni River, gained his vast empire by "quelling the tribes with terrible retribution," according to Collier. See page 58.

[37] Jean Piel, "Le Caoutchouc, La Winchester et L'Empire," Revue Francaise d'Histoire d'Outre-mer, LXVII, (1980), nos. 248-249, 227-252.

basin.[38] She argues that the industry was largely controlled by Brazilian (and Portuguese) aviador houses, with the foreign export houses wielding less power than those who tend to blame international capitalism for wholesale exploitation of developing countries might think. While her study, probably the best written about the Amazon rubber industry as a whole, is mostly concerned with the system as it developed in Brazil, the main producer, she also has a few words to say about the system that developed in the Putumayo area.

> The company (Peruvian Amazon Company) was exploiting caucho rubber, which comes from the Castilloa elasticus - a type of tree destroyed by the tapping process. Thus the firm had no incentive to create long-term commercial ties with the indigenous inhabitants, and the remote location of the caucho districts allowed one family, the Aranas, to become virtual tyrants in the areas under exploitation. Eschewing more subtle forms of coercion such as debt-peonage or veiled threats of violence, the Aranas and other caucheros of the Peruvian Amazon freely resorted to mutilation, torture, and murder as means of intimidating and disciplining the native population.[39]

While making some good points, Weinstein sounds a bit too much like Roger Casement, using solely economic analysis of a phenomenon which is far more complicated. Weinstein fails to take into consideration the oppressive systems utilized in other areas, such as Bolivia, where Hevea brasiliensis grew, the main rubber species which could be tapped for years. As well, and to be fair, Weinstein's study focuses on the Brazilian trade which used many more "white" Cearense tappers than in the Upper

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[38] Weinstein defines aviador as "literally a 'supplier,' the term referred to itinerant traders who supplied the rubber tappers with goods on credit or in exchange for rubber, as well as to the large commerical houses in Belem that outfitted the traders and marketed the rubber." The Amazon Rubber Boom, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 275.

[39] Weinstein, The Amazon Rubber Boom, 26.

Amazon.[40] Also, her study focuses on the managerial and marketing aspect of the trade rather than the labour systems utilized during the boom. Hers is a valuable study but it falls short in interpreting the abuses inherent in a system like that found in the Putumayo.

In the last 15 years, Spanish writers have offered a few works about the rubber industry and, more specifically, the role of the Putumayo in it. A fairly informative article is that written by Jorge Villegas and Fernando Botero.[41] They examine the abuse of the Indians to provide virtually "free" labour in order to make Putumayan rubber profitable. They also conclude that the general attitude toward the Indians by the "whites", be they Colombians or Peruvians, was the same - they wanted their labour. While mentioning some of the underlying ideas of what "civilizing" Indians meant, they do not, however, discuss in any detail the underlying cultural tensions that made the use of force and violence so prevalent. Theirs is too short a work to deal with these in any great detail.

A more recent study of the history of the extractive industries in the Colombian Amazon, with a special section on the Putumayo, is a monograph by Camilo Domínguez and Augusto Gómez.[42] While there is much useful information in this book about the various extractive resources and their exploitation, the sections dealing with the Putumayo,

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[40] The term "white" is used here and elsewhere as a cultural term rather than a strictly biological term. Although some caucheros were black or mestizo they will be discussed in this paper as accepting ideas of economy indicative of "white" culture as opposed to native culture.

[41] Jorge Villegas and Fernando Botero, "Putumayo: indígenas, caucho y sangre," Cuadernos Colombianos, Tomo III, Marzo de 1979, 529-565.

[42] Camilo Domínguez and Augusto Gómez, La economía extractiva en la Amazonia Colombiana, 1850-1930, (Bogotá: Corporación Colombiana para la Amazonia-Araracuara, 1990)

the Casa Arana and the earlier Colombians in the area are less enlightening. Their treatment of the Casa Arana is fairly straightforward and says little different than what the standard primary sources say about the company and atrocities. Their section on the "Conquest of the Huitotos" is, however, somewhat of a throwback to the idea of the benevolence of the Colombians toward the Indians as opposed to the Peruvians. Being almost solely based on the unedited and undated writings of Aquileo Tobar, some mysterious "voz de la selva", it is of dubious worth.[43]

A much more complicated, if not abstruse, analysis of the atrocities committed in the Putumayo and elsewhere in the upper Amazon is that written by anthropologist Michael Taussig in his Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing. Taussig's 1987 book is not only a unique and valuable

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[43] Aquileo Tobar apparently grew up in the encampments of the Casa Arana. Being 55 years old in 1971 would put his birthday in 1916, almost a decade after the publicized atrocities of the Peruvian Amazon Company and twenty years before the "conquest of the Huitotos", by Colombians like Crisóstomo Hernández and Benjamín Larraniaga, information about whom Domínguez and Gómez use Tobar as a major source. Tobar lived his whole life in the Putumayo which became officially a part of Colombia in 1923 which could affect his views of the early Colombians who conquered the Indians. The fact that Tobar was a mestizo who "lived like a whiteman" may also influence his opinion about the men who conquered and "civilized" his Indian relatives. See Domínguez and Gómez, La economía extractiva, 201-202.

Another recent monograph that deals with the Putumayo peripherally is José A. Flores Marín's La explotación del caucho en el Perú, (Lima: Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 1987). Marín takes a broad look at the industry as a whole and describes it in rather Marxist terms, seeing it as controlled by international (especially British) capitalism and describing the labour problems in the area as a war between classes, the bourgeousie (the rubber companies) and the proletariat (the workers, be they native or enganche labourers). This gives little insight into the processes involved in the established labour practices of the Putumayo.

exploration of the culture of domination and colonization mediated through the use of terror, it is also a deconstructionist's attempt to demonstrate the lack of objectivity in narrative. While using travel accounts and other historical writings, Taussig argues that the colonization of the Putumayo area was an interaction between "civilization" and "wildness" in which terror played the key role. The fear of Indian rebellion and cannibalism justified the use of slavery and violence in the colonial imagination. "The only way they could live in such a terrifying world...was to inspire terror themselves."[44] In the words of Taussig:

> Putumayo terror was the terror of the fineness of that line as international capitalism converted the 'excesses' of torture into rituals of production no less important than the rubber gathering itself. Torture and terror were not simply utilitarian means of production; they were a form of life, a mode of production, and in many ways, for many people, not least of whom were the Indians themselves, its main and consuming product.[45]

Taussig's is a Conradesque voyage into the world of colonization of the Colombian jungles - the South American heart of darkness. It is also "a sophisticated challenge to academic conventions of explanation (i.e. it is confusing and hard to understand at times) and ... an experiment in writing that uses novel techniques to communicate another cultural experience."[46]

While Taussig explains the use of terror in the process of colonization, that is, that terror is the product of an interaction or conflict between two cultures, he is less explicit in dealing with the

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[44] Taussig, Shamanism, 122.

[45] Taussig, Shamanism, 100.

[46] See Catherine LeGrand's review of Taussig's book in The Americas, XLV, (1), 1988, 126.

reason the interaction or conflict had to occur in the first place. That is to say he deals less with the reasons why the "whites" had to dominate the Indians than with how they did it. Most writers discussed above, in fact, while implicitly acknowledging the obvious fact that the atrocities of the Putumayo were an extreme example of one culture forcing itself over another, fail to discuss it as such. Few mention that two worlds of value systems - differences in ideas of exchange and economy, let alone differences in ideas of work and leisure, and man-land relationships - met on a collision course. It is hardly surprising that when two world views met that were very different, even irreconcilable, conflict would be the result and, depending on the circumstances, could result in extraordinary occurrences.

What is also surprising in much that has been written about the Putumayo atrocities is the lack of historical perspective in these discussions. While many writers point out that the atrocities that occurred there were not unique, that is, similar conditions could be found in other areas of the Amazon basin, the idea of spatial similarity of circumstances is not carried through to examine the temporal realm. That is to say, few authors look to discuss the historical precedents of such a system of labour and exploitation. (Taussig does this to a certain extent but he is mostly concerned with the historical evolution of terror). A look back to the earliest Europeans in the area reveals that not only the attitudes towards the Indians but also the processes and instruments of domination, (such as the whip, the stocks, correrías or slave raids, reductions, etc.) are strikingly similar. While it is clear that circumstances change that produce differences in extent of actions - for instance the high value of rubber probably had a direct impact on the

severity of the atrocities - processes and attitudes of domination, at least in the jungles of the Upper Amazon, seem to have remained surprisingly similar.

CHAPTER TWO:

Native Culture in the Putumayo

In order to understand why "white" and Indian relations were often turbulent in the Amazon during the rubber era and before, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the geography of the area and the type of life the native peoples had developed within this tropical ecosystem. Although the Amazon basin can be discussed, in general terms, as a single ecological unit, I will focus on the northwest Amazon area and how it affected the life and society developed by its inhabitants.

The Amazon basin contains the largest tropical forest in the world. 100 million years ago the basin was a large lake which drained to the west into the Pacific. About 25 million years ago with the formation of the Andes mountains the basin began emptying exclusively into the Atlantic. Since then sediments from the Andes have been accumulating as the basin has been a fluctuating series of lakes and marshes corresponding to different periods of global glaciation. The last of these large lakes drained about 8-10,000 years ago leaving what is called the terra firme, or the lands never flooded by highwater, and the varzea, or the former bottom of this lake which is the present floodplain of the Amazon basin.[47]

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[47] The above is a very brief and simplified overview of the geological formation of the Amazon basin. For a more detailed account see the following: G.T. Prance and T.E. Lovejoy, eds., Key Environments: Amazonia, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1985), 49-71; H. Sioli, ed., The Amazon: Limnology and Landscape Ecology of the Mighty Tropical River and its Basin, (Dordrecht: Dr. W. Junk Publishers, 1984), 15-47; R.D. Stone, Dreams of Amazonia, (New York: Elisabeth Sifton Books, 1985), 25-27; and G. Irion, "Quaternary geological history of the Amazon lowlands," in Tropical Forests: Botanical Dynamics, Speciation and

It is this floodplain area which is the most productive agriculturally due to the relatively high levels of nutrients brought down from the geologically young Andes. The larger terra firme part of the Amazonian sedimentary basin, which accounts for about 98% of the basin's total area, is characterized by gentle rolling lowlands with terraces as high as 250 meters in the western reaches. Generally, the different soils of this area have a low nutrient capacity but there is a considerable variation in soil fertility.[48] The western sedimentary beds of the Amazon basin are a more dynamic region with different areas of silt deposition affecting the landscape mosaic of the area. Patches of different soil composition due to this area's fluvial deposition pattern gave a crucial role in the formation of distinct forest types in the area as well as differences in forest regeneration mechanisms and the types of flowers and animals in the area.[49]

Claiming as much as ten percent of the world's five to ten million species of plants and animals, the Amazon basin has long been known to be the richest repository of biological material on the planet. With over 50,000 higher plant species, theories concerning the reasons for such diversity have abounded. Regardless of which theory one supports the

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Diversity, L.B. Holm-Nielsen, etal., eds., (London: Academic Press, 1989), 23-34.

[48] Carl F. Jordan, "Soils of the Amazon Rainforest," in Key Environments: Amazon, describes six major classifications of Amazonian soils based on their geologic origins. He also mentions than despite these broad categories, all of which tend to be fairly nutrient poor, "micro-patches" of better soil can be found throughout the Amazonian area indicating the variability of this ecosystem. 83-94. See also E.J. Fittkau et al., eds., Biogeography and Ecology in South America, (The Hague: Dr. W. Junk N.V. Publishers, 1968), 82-112.

[49] See J. Salo and M. Rasanen, "Hierarchy of landscape patterns in western Amazon," in L.B. Holm-Nielsen et al., eds. Tropical Forests: Botanical Dynamics, Speciation and Diversity, (London: Academic Press, 1989), 35-36.

fact still remains that the Amazon basin contains more species of flora and fauna than any other area on earth.[50]

This biodiversity is also a consequence of the climatic and hydrological nature of the Amazon. While suspended material from the Andes is the constant renewer of the soils of the varzea, the Andes are also the barrier that bars the Amazon basin from the climatic regime of the Pacific. The basin is most affected by the trade winds of the Atlantic and the large amounts of precipitation they bring with them. The forests of the Amazon, however, are such moisture producers that the water vapour rising from evaporation and transpiration, or secondary vapour, is of the same magnitude as the primary vapour pool arising from the ocean.

This high rate of moisture recycling is possible due to the high temperatures and isothermic nature of the basin. Although mean temperatures are between 24 and 28 degrees Celsius and the basin is generally moist and warm, there are regional variations in climate. For example, precipitation and length of dry season can vary from over 3000 mm of rain per year with no appreciable dry season in the northwest to

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50 For arguments favouring the refugia theory of biodiversity see Ghillean T. Prance, "The Changing Forests" in Prance and T.E. Lovejoy, eds., Key Environments: Amazonia, 146-165. For those questioning the refugia theory see J. Salo and M. Rasanen, "Hierarchy of landscape patterns in western Amazon," 35-45, and A.H. Gentry, "Speciation in tropical forests," 113-130, both in L.B. Holm-Nielsen et al., eds., Tropical Forests: Botanical Dynamics, Speciation and Diversity. It should be noted that while some scientists favour explanations of biodiversity due to habitat differences or parapatric speciation this does not mean they deny the existence of drastic climate changes during glacial periods and therefore the existence of refugia areas. They do, however, think that speciation has occurred not exclusively, or perhaps even primarily, through allopatric speciation due to refugia (i.e. speciation due to geographic isolation) but rather through differences in macro and microhabitat which not only vary greatly throughout the expanse of the Amazon basin but can also change drastically through time.

1500 - 2000 mm of rain per year and a dry season up to 4 months in the south-central region of the Amazon basin. As well as regional variations, a vast array of microclimates within respective regions also help to create different conditions that promote biodiversity.[51]

Despite the relative infertility of Amazon forest soils relative to temperate forests, most soils, particularly in higher areas, are well drained and have excellent granular structure. This stability of structure results in conditions which favour root production and, in fact, it is the specialized roots of the trees and plants in the forest that have enabled them to adapt and flourish in Amazon soils. Plant growth is also facilitated by the growth of tough, leathery leaves which discourage attacks by insects and other herbivores. The canopy of the forest plays an important role in nutrient retrieval and recycling by atomizing the heavy and frequent rains which reduces leaching of the soil and enables lichens, algae and a whole array of epiphytes, especially bromeliads (pineapple family) and orchids, to capture nutrients from the rainwater which runs over the tree surfaces. The nutrient cycling of the Amazon forest is so efficient that it represents the largest pool of nutrients and available energy or biomass in the Amazon ecosystem.[52]

The fact that most of the nutrients of the system are found in the vegetative matter has a direct effect on the animal life of the system.

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51 See Eneas Salati, "The Climatology and Hydrology of Amazonia," in Key Environments: Amazonia, Prance and Lovejoy eds., 18-48; and Jesús Marden dos Santos, "Climate, Natural Vegetation, and Soils in Amazonia: An Overview," in Robert E. Dickinson, ed., The Geophysiology of Amazonia: Vegetation and Climate Interactions, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1987), 25-36.

52 See Carl F. Jordan, "Soils of the Amazon Rainfroest", 83-94; and T.V. St. John, "Mycorrhizae," 277-283, both in Prance and Lovejoy, eds., Key Environments: Amazonia.

Despite the lack of large animals like those endemic to Africa and Asia, an abundance of different mammals dwell in the Amazon, many of them herbivorous and arboreal. These, together with the over 600 species of birds are key players in the propagation of plant seeds through their ingestion and defecation. Birds and mammals occupy different niches within the variable forest types of the terra firme and varzea, as well as different niches (e.g. different levels within the forest canopy) within a particular forest which adds to the regions complexity and diversity.

Many animals have adapted over the millenia to life in or around the other great geographical feature of the Amazon basin -its rivers. Many ground dwelling animals are aquatic or semi-aquatic, but the importance of water to the fauna of the region is best illustrated by the more than 2500 species of fish which can be found in the Amazon river and its tributaries. Every conceivable aquatic niche has been filled and due to the relative scarcity of phyto and zooplankton (due to the relatively low level of nutrients allowed to run off through the soil) most fish rely on a diet of fallen insects, leaves, seeds or flowers during the dry season and a wash of similar material when the waters rise. The fish and other animals of the Amazon basin are clearly a key component to the complexity and health of the ecosystem as a whole.[53]

Although there is little evidence for the presence of man in the Amazon before about 5000 years ago, hunter-gatherers were present in surrounding dryer habitats at least 12 to 14,000 years ago. This lack of evidence may be due to the degradability of the Amazon peoples' tools

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[53] See E.J. Fittkau, "The Fauna of South America," in Biogeography and Ecology in South America, Fittkau et al., eds., 624-658; J. Gery, "The fishes of Amazonia," in The Amazon, H. Sioli, ed., 353-370; and Michael Goulding, "Forest Fishes of the Amazon," in Key Environments: Amazonia, Prance and Lovejoy, eds., 267-276.

and possessions and the constantly changing river channels which tend to wipe out previously inhabited sites. Indirect evidence of inhabitation of Amazonia comes in the form of archaeological (mostly different pottery types), ethnographic and linguistic patterns. While the evidence is not conclusive, it seems probable that people were present in the Amazon tropics over 10,000 years ago and had certainly arrived 5000 years later.[54]

The systems of subsistence developed by people in the Amazon basin depended on the type of environment they chose or were forced to inhabit. The varzea, which experiences annual inundation, is the more productive of the two in terms of its agricultural and biological carrying capacity. While representing only 2 percent of the Amazon basin area it has been estimated that it supported a population density of 14.6 persons per square kilometer. By contrast, the terra firme which consists of 98 percent of the Amazon basin is estimated to have a population density of just 0.2 persons per square kilometer. In 1492, the estimated population for the Amazon basin, as calculated by William Denevan, was 6.8 million with almost 500,000 living in eastern Peru alone.[55]

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[54] See Betty Meggars in "The indigenous peoples of Amazonia, their cultures, land use patterns and effects of the landscape and biota," in H. Sioli, ed., The Amazon, 627-628, and in "The Early History of Man in Amazonia," in T.C. Whitmore and G.T. Prance, eds., Biogeography and Quaternary History in Tropical America, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 151-153. Recent evidence suggests that man was present in northeastern Brazil, a site called Pedra Furada, as long as 50,000 years ago. It is likely, therefore that man inhabited sites in the Amazon basin well over 5000 years ago. See Paul G. Bahn, "50,00-year-old Americans of Pedra Furada," Nature, 362, 11 Mar. 1993: 114-115.

[55] See William M. Denevan, "The Aboriginal Population of Amazonia," in The Native Population of the Americas in 1492, 2nd ed., W. Denevan, ed., (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 226-230. Denevan bases his population calculations on a combination of factors.

In the Putumayo area of the northwest Amazon the major rivers, like the Putumayo and Napo, are termed white water rivers. These rivers contain large loads of clay particles which become suspended in the waters when they move down the Andean slopes with high velocity and eroding capacity. However, the water level of these rivers does not follow a seasonal pattern, but rather can change from day to day depending on the rainfall in a river's catchment area. Between the large white water rivers there is a system of smaller rivers with black, oligotrophic (low in nutrient content) water draining the flat plain of northwest Amazonia. These waters are more seasonally influenced by the rains in this area and produce black water rivers and lakes, some of which will dry up during the dry season when evapotranspiration exceeds rainfall. The forest along their margins are exposed to a seasonal change in water level and are similar to the black water flooded igapo forest of the lower Amazon. Beyond the flood plains of both the white and black water rivers and lakes stands the terra firme forest.[56] While these are general

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He estimates carrying capacity of the two land types, varzea and terra firma, by analyzing nutrient loads, especially protein availability; reviews the qualitative observations of the early Amazonian explorers' chronicles; and uses rates of death due to epidemics of introduced diseases as calculated for other areas of the Americas. While it is impossible to verify his estimates, Denevan is not alone in believing that aboriginal population was well below Amazonia's carrying capacity. This, however, does nothing to substantiate his claims.

[56] See H. Balslev and S.S. Renner, "Diversity of east Ecuadorean lowland forests," in Tropical Forest: Botanical Dynamics, Speciation and Diversity, L.B. Holm-Nielsen et al., eds., 287-288. The term igapo refers to a forest seasonally flooded along banks of major black water streams and rivers where trees are partially or completely under water for several months each year. Oligotrophic refers to the waters, soil and the forests which igapos produce and have low soil nutrient levels. These forests often have symptoms and adaptations of nutrient-stressed forests. See C.F. Jordan, ed., An Amazonian Rain Forest: The Structure and Function of a Nutrient Stressed Ecosystem and the Impact of Slash-and-Burn Agriculture, (Paris and London: UNESCO and The Parthenon Publishing

forest types found in the Putumayo area it must be remembered that fertility within different forest types may vary considerably due to differences in microclimates and soils.

According to the decription above the forests of the Putumayo can be described as possessing "limited agricultural potential."[57] Generally, this type of area is associated with slash-and-burn agriculture as found in many areas of the terra firme throughout the Amazon basin. The type of culture that has been described in this kind of environment was labelled the "basic tropical forest culture" by ethnologist Julian Steward in 1948. While this is not the most useful or descriptive of terms some of the traits assigned to this cultural term are applicable to the groups of peoples in the Putumayo area at the turn of the century. Some general characteristics of this cultural type are, as mentioned, slash-and-burn agriculture with fields being abandoned after about three years. Communal houses are moved usually every 3 - 5 years when the fertility of the land is exhausted and the game depleted. Populations of villages

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Group, 1989), 14, 65-67. This book deals with the analysis of the nutrient stressed forest of San Carlos de Río Negro in Venezuela. Relatively low population densities and low biomass suggest this ecosystem is under some stress due to low phosphorus and nitrogen in the soil. While probably less fertile than the Putumayo region due to the deposition of some Andean alluvial deposits, the nature of the Putumayo forests discussed above indicates they are likely closer to the oligotrophic or lower end of the fertility gradient.

[57] Meggars in "The Early History of Man in Amazonia," Biogeography and Quaternary History in Tropical America, characterizes three types of environments: those unsuitable for agriculture and inhabited by small, generally mobile hunter-gatherers; those with limited agricultural potential, inhabited by larger groups which stay in one location for about three years; and those environments suitable for intensive cultivation which can and did support much larger sedentary groups due to the fertility of the seasonally inundated varzea floodplains. The Putumayo area is probably best described as a combination of the first two environments with its black water igapo-like forests being fairly unsuitable for agriculture and its white water forests and terra firme regions possessing limited agricultural potential. See pages 152-154.

are usually less than 200, but may reach 500 or more, and social relations are defined by ties of kinship. The shaman is the only specialized role and raids on other groups are often stimulated by the need to avenge the death of an adult member of the community, usually attributed to sorcery. Despite frequent raids between communities, inter-village trading is also present. Populations are prevented from becoming too large, too concentrated or too sedentary by cultural practices such as infanticide, abortion, taboos on sexual relations, blood revenge and warfare.[58] These traits, as will be discussed in more detail later, can be seen as being developed in order to facilitate accomodation to the environment. While these are some of the general characteristics of peoples of the Putumayo region it is important to try to get a clearer picture of their culture if one is to understand the interaction which occurred between this culture and the colonizing culture. It is to a more specific discussion of the culture of the peoples of the Putumayo, especially the Huitotos, that we now turn.

When examining specific native groups in the Amazon basin one is often limited by the type of information available. For instance, discussion of the culture of the Huitoto Indians in the Putumayo is limited by the lack of anthropological and historical information dealing with the time period of this study. What is available is a mosaic of travel accounts, missionary reports and governmental reports; each containing their own biases and descriptions of peoples through culturally tinted lenses. In addition, there are the early ethnographic sources, written between the 1920s and 1950s, and finally, the more recent

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[58] See Meggars, "The Early History of Man in Amazonia," Biogeography and Quaternary History in Tropical America, 152-153.

anthropological studies of various groups in the Amazonian area, which add to the already multi-imaged picture of native culture. When using these sources one must always be careful not to extrapolate backwards in time cultural traits which may have been acquired through contact with other groups, be they native or "white". While he may be overstating the case somewhat, the words of Thomas Whiffen, a British traveller in the region in 1908-1909, should be given some consideration: "...in any critical appraisement it must be remembered that these tribes are changing day by day, and every year that passes will increase the difference between the Amazonian native as I knew him and as he may be when studied by my successors."[59] With this in mind, it may seem that a useful picture of how natives lived in the Putumayo region before the rubber era is impossible to paint. But one can still draw from the available sources a reasonable, if not totally clear sketch of the way these people lived at this time.

The Putumayo area was inhabited by several different groups of people: the Huitotos (or Witotos), the Boras, the Ocainas, the Andokes and the Nonuyas.[60] The most important of these, for this study, were

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[59] Thomas Whiffen, The North-West Amazons: Notes of Some Months Spent Among Cannibal Tribes, (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1915), 1.

[60] Dealing with different native groups is an anthropological puzzle as they are variously described in many different sources under many different names. For example, Julian H. Steward, ed., in his massive compilation, Handbook of South American Indians, Vol. 3, The Tropical Forest Tribes, describes the "Witotoan" tribes, in general, as Tupian-speaking and occupying the Paraparaná and upper Caquetá rivers. The group as a whole is made up of many sub-groups. The Witoto group proper (also spelt Uitoto, Huito, Ouitoto, Huitato, Huitota, Guitoto, etc.) is subdivided into many groups such as the Kaime, Xura, Seueni, and others. Groups with differentiated dialects include the Bora (also having a variety of names), the Nonuya (or Achote, Achiote), the Okaina (or Ocaina, Dukaiya), and the Muenane. Another group, the Fitita, may be an Okaina subdivision. The eastern and southeastern dialects, that is,

the Huitotos, as they comprised the largest source of labour for the Peruvian Amazon Company. It seems that the Huitotos had minimal contact with whites until about 1886, when rubber gatherers from Colombia moved into the Putumayo district and "conquered" them.[61]

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the Orejon or "large ears" should not be confused with many other tribes with this name, especially the nearby Tucanoan Coto. 749-750. Using Steward here by no means indicates that his classification is the most reliable, rather it is illustrative of the lack of clearcut information on these groups of native peoples, in so far as they are not even clearly defined as different groups. This is due to a combination of a lack of study and the changes experienced by the different groups from the end of the nineteenth century.

[61] Steward indicates that an early missionary, Padre Ferrer visited the Putumayo River in 1605, and that the "Witoto" are first mentioned by name in 1695, but that their first extended contact with whitemen was not until the end of the nineteenth century. Handbook, Vol. 3., 750. Victor Daniel Bonilla, in his Servants of God or Masters of Men?: The Story of a Capuchin Mission in Amazonia, (London: Penguin Books, 1972) points out that while there was considerable activity in the upper Sibundoy and Putumayo valleys, in the lower reaches of the Putumayo, where the Huitoto groups were located, there was little contact with whites, except for the occasional merchant who "sailed along the Putumayo and the Amazon as far as Brazil 'bartering....'" These merchants passed through the area during the nineteenth century; they were only entering the area in larger numbers, and with greater influence, with the extraction of quinine which began in the second half of the 19th century. 35. This says little, however, about how much just a few trade items such as an axe or machete may make within a group or between warring tribes. Furthermore, Roger Casement in his Correspondence Respecting the Treatment of British Colonial Subjects and Native Indians Employed in the Collection of Rubber in the Putumayo District, known in the literature as the Putumayo Blue Book, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, Misc. No. 8, 1912), has this to say about white intrusion of the Putumayo area: "No missions or missionaries would seem to have ever penetrated to the regions here in question. On the upper waters of the Putumayo itself religious instruction and Christian worship appear to have been established by Colombian settlers, but these civilising influences had not journeyed sufficiently far down-stream to reach the Huitotos or their neighbours. Save for the raids of slavers coming up the Japurá or Putumayo, their contact with white men had been a distant and far-off story that in little affected their home life, save possibly to add an element of demoralisation in the inducements offered for the sale of human beings." 26-27. It should be kept in mind, however, that these are judgments made by non-natives as to the influence white men had on natives,

Even if the Indian groups of the Putumayo had some sporadic contact with whitemen before the rubber era, they were still greatly influenced by the land in which they lived. The geography and ecology of their environment had a direct influence on the life they lived and the culture they developed.

Like all peoples, the most important task of the Huitotos was to survive. In the tropical forest agriculture required a special knowledge and sensitivity to the land; this they had developed. Like other groups, the Huitotos were agriculturists, but also fishermen and hunter-gatherers. The type of agriculture they practiced, slash and burn, was consistent with their environment in the sense that it was sustainable over generations. The men would prepare their fields either alone or communally, though each man seemed to have the use of his own field, by cutting down the large trees and undergrowth with a stone ax. This slash was allowed to dry during the hot dry season and then was burned before the rains began. The crops would be planted by the women at the beginning of the wet season and would be cultivated and collected by them when they were ripe or needed. The staple crop was bitter manioc or cassava, but maize, yams, sugar cane, bananas and other fruit trees were also planted using simple tools like a digging stick. These plots were and are called chacras.[62]

The chacras were located away from the main communal house or maloca, usually about a half mile away. Women would make daily trips to these plots, sometimes the family would stay a few days in small huts

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something only natives could accurately judge, and something about which we have no record.

[62] See Thomas Whiffen, The North-West Amazons, 103-104 and J. Steward, ed., Handbook, Vol. 3, 751.

by the plots, to take care of the crops. In such a climate, plants grow quickly, both crops and weeds, and constant vigilance against the encroachment of unwanted plants was a necessity, something working rubber would interfere with. Each family might have several chacras which were in various stages of development. Due to the limitations of the soil a family might harvest a small crop of maize, which ripened quickly but used many soil nutrients, and then harvest their staple of manioc between eight months and two years after being planted. After two or three years another plot had to be cleared and the process continued. But the first chacra was not abandoned completely, rather it was visited over the years as it reverted back to jungle in order that the other cultigens, like the various fruit trees planted, might be utilized.[63]

The system, therefore, was like that practiced by other tropical forest natives: one of shifting cultivation of a variety that provided "food, medicines, and materials for clothing, tools, storage containers, and other manufactures."[64] While this might seem like a fairly simple system to maintain it was fraught with irregularities such as differences in microenvironments and the changing conditions of each cultivator's personal and familial history. For example, the size of a family and the age of its children would affect the amount of food produced over the years. According to American Consul Fuller these plots demanded care and attention and it was "plain to see that if prevented in any way from

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[63] Whiffen, 102-105; Steward, 751; and Slavery in Peru, House of Representatives Document no. 1366, 62nd Congress, 3rd Session, House Documents Vol. 3, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), Report from American Consul Fuller in Iquitos to the Secretary of State, October 28, 1912, 51.

[64] Allen Johnson, "Machiguenga Gardens", in Adaptive Responses of Native Amazonians, (New York: Academic Press, 1983), Raymond B. Hames and William T. Vickers, eds., 30.

working their farms, the Indians must of necessity starve."[65] This, of course, would have serious ramifications on not only their culture but their very survival when the Indians -men, women and children - were forced to collect rubber and neglect their chacras.

The Huitotos also hunted and fished in order to add much valued protein to their diet. According to Whiffen, men went hunting two or three times a week from boyhood, and developed acute skills of observation and knowledge of the habits of animals and birds.[66] This is consistent with recent anthropological studies of other Amazonian peoples.[67] While the Huitotos used a variety of traps and weapons for hunting, such as the blowgun and spears, it is unclear how dependent on game they were. Casement, in the his report to the British Foreign Office, remarks that "the forest must have been fairly full of game up to quite recently, for the Indians seem to have had a sufficiency of meat diet...."[68] But his remarks are not supported by those found in American Consul Fuller's remarks to the Secretary of State about two years later in 1912: "There is very little game in the forest, but they (the Indians of the Putumayo) get an occasional monkey or bird."[69] Since the Huitoto and neighbouring tribes moved their houses quite regularly it is possible that they did so not only due to the nature of their shifting agriculture, but also in response to depleted game resources in an area

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65 Slavery in Peru, Consul Fuller to Secretary of State, Oct. 28, 1912, 51.

66 See Whiffen's description of Huitoto and other native hunting and fishing techniques. The North-West Amazons, 106-114.

67 See James A. Yost and Patricia M. Kelley, "Shotguns, Blowguns, and Spears: The Analysis of Technological Efficiency," in Adaptive Responses of Amazonian Peoples, 194.

68 Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 26.

69 Slavery in Peru, Fuller to Sec. of State, Oct. 28, 1912, 51.

after a certain period of time. This may explain the discrepancy in the two sources as the two investigators went into the same areas almost exactly two years apart. Since it is not known how long the Indians were in these areas prior to Casement's visit it is quite possible that they had been there long enough to deplete game resources by the time the American Consul entered the area. What is more important, however, is the fact that whether game in sufficient quantity existed in the area or not, it is unlikely given the type and amount of work forced upon the Indians that they had sufficient time to hunt on a regular basis.[70]

Another source of protein for these groups was fish. These they caught in a variety of ways, including dip and drag nets, spears, bow and arrow, and various traps. The method that most clearly shows these groups' knowledge of their environment was their use of barbasco, a poison which was put in a dammed area or small stream and killed fish without affecting the meat of the fish. By all accounts, the Huitotos were good fishermen which indicates the high level of adaptation to their environment achieved by them.[71] Protein procurement in the form of game and fish was the exclusive job of men among the Huitoto. Their

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[70] Both Casement and Consul Fuller comment on the lack of sufficient food for the Indians during the worst period of the atrocities (which was probably from about 1904 to 1910), given the amount of work they were required to do. This will be discussed later but in addition to collecting rubber the Indians had to attend to all the needs of the whitemen (i.e. build and maintain their houses, build roads or trails and in some places grow their food). See Putumayo Blue Book, 17-18 and Slavery in Peru, 51, 146 and 161. Consul Fuller's comment on the lack of game in the area may just reflect his own observations, which coming from a whiteman, who probably did not spend a lot of time hunting in the jungle should be taken with some caution. It should also be noted that native groups often take a while to develope game trails and hunting regimens before they successfully utilize new hunting grounds.

[71] See Steward, Handbook, 752; Whiffen, 112-114; and Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 26.

catch, in addition to produce grown in their chacras and that collected in the wild (like honey, insect larvae and wild fruits) by the women, was enough to adequately feed these people, at least before whitemen affected their work regimen. Food production and procurement, however, occupied the majority of their working time and the success they achieved varied with time and space depending on variabilities in weather, soils, availability of fish and game and many other factors. In general, however, food was adequate especially when one considers that game was divided communally by the household head.[72] This practice not only ensured that most or all of the village would partake of high quality nourishment (i.e. protein), but also, and perhaps more importantly, strengthened bonds between group members.

The Huitotos and other groups of the Putumayo also lived communally in large thatch-roofed houses or malocas. These could house as many as 150 people but generally each group was smaller. Each family was allotted a small space where they slung their hammocks and had their small cooking fire. An area at the center of the structure was where rougher work, such as crushing yucca and manioc, was

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[72] Steward, Handbook, 752. This concurs with more recent anthropological studies of other Amazonian peoples. For example, Roland W. Bergman's Amazon Economics: The Simplicity of Shipibo Indian Wealth, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1980). Bergman points out that among the Shipibo of the Ucayali Valley, when a family kills a large animal, children carry "large chunks" of the meat as gifts to the houses of relatives and neighbors. "With small animals and fish catches they would share the meat by a communal meal." "In mundane matters of subsistence they are egalitarian: sharing food is traditional." 173 and 204.

See also William Curtis Farabee, Indian Tribes of Eastern Peru, (Cambridge, Mass.: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1922), where he states: "They (the Huitoto) hunt together in common, and bring the catch to the chief, who distributes it equally among the families." Vol. 10, 138.

carried out, as well as communal dances and celebrations.[73] These houses were built on dry sites some distance from any river for protection against enemies, both white and native, and insects.[74] Malocas were abandoned when new clearings or chacras were needed, when game became scarce in an area or when a chief died.[75]

The maloca, however, was much more than merely a place to live. "It serves as family home, kitchen and dining hall, workshop and storehouse, meeting place, club and dance hall, cemetery and temple and is a potent symbol representing the structure and divisions of society and model of the cosmos."[76] Through the construction and maintenance of

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[73] Slavery in Peru, Report from American Consul of Iquitos, Charles Eberhardt to the Secretary of State, Nov. 30, 1907, 108.

[74] According to Nicole Maxwell, a pioneer ethnopharmacologist who spent time in the Putumayo region in the 1950s and 1960s, "Witotos never have lived on the rivers, always they build their houses inland." This does not suggest they lived far from the rivers just not right at the banks, which concurs with earlier sources. See Nicole Maxwell, Witch Doctor's Apprentice: Hunting for Medicinal Plants in the Amazon, (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990), 34.

[75] Steward, Handbook, Vol. 3, 752, 758. Daniel R. Gross, "Village Movement in Relation to Resources in Amazonia," in Adaptive Responses of Native Amazonians, mentions a few more reasons for village moves among four groups in central Brazil since 1900. Among the major reasons are internal disputes, external attack, illness or epidemic, and government or missionary inducement (forced settlement). 436.

[76] Elizabeth Carmichael et al., The Hidden Peoples of the Amazon, (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1985), 78. Carmichael has this to say about malocas: "The maloca or communal house is the characteristic dwelling of the Indians that live, or once lived, in the forests of Amazonia." Her description applies particularly to the Barasana tribe, who live north of the Huitotos on the upper Caquetá but "because of the overall similarity of Amazonian cultures in terms of subsistence, social organisation and symbolism, much...applies elsewhere, at least in broad outline." 78. Later she states: "It is in the context of rituals that the maloca assumes its major significance as a cosmic symbol for at such times the house becomes one with the universe and spirit world it represents...Symbol of cosmic space and of human society, the maloca also represents a human body...Thus the body physical, the body social and the universe, micro-space and macro-space are all united in one potent symbol. 93. For similar ideas about

the maloca, Amazonian tribes make connections between their physical world and spiritual world which informs their everyday actions. Since "white" society makes no such connection between the cosmos and the type of house one lives in, the stress involved in forcing Indians to abandone their communal houses, (i.e. their own "replicas of the cosmos") and live in "whiteman" style houses (which occurred during the missionary and rubber era) must have been substantial and most likely added to the Indians' unwillingness to do the whiteman's bidding.

The social organization of the Huitotos probably resembled that of other native groups in the Amazonian area. While considerable variation among groups could exist many groups in the area, including the Huitoto were organized on an exogamous, patrilineal basis. That is, each tribal group consisted of an extended family led by a household head followed by his sons and his sons' wives and unmarried children. Children would marry outside the group, with a female joining the group of her husband. The headman or chief usually had several wives and access to the produce of their chacras, as well as owning all the prisoner slaves. This helped make the chief the richest, both materially and politically, in the group. The chief also led the group in warfare and festivals.[77] The chief's position, however, was not of a dictatorial nature. Rather, decisions were made communally by a tribal council, consisting of all the

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communal houses and conceptions of the cosmos, see David M. Guss's study of the Yekuana of the Upper Orinoco, To Weave and Sing: Art, Symbol, and Narrative in the South American Rain Forest, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 21-27.

[77] The above discussion is a generalized one. For some Amazonian tribes the concept of a chief is a foreign one, imposed by enthnologists' own ideas of social organization. It is difficult to say from the available sources just how important the idea of "chief" was to the Huitoto.

males of the group, with the chief's voice carrying the most weight. If the chief proved to be unjust or was too free with his power and privileges, his people could move away and leave him behind. It is not surprising then that when faced with unjust and intransigent whitemen Indians constantly sought to leave. The chief was usually succeeded by one of his sons, but this had to be approved by the tribe.[78]

While the Huitotos in a village lived communally in one large house, they did not particularly get along with other groups of Huitotos and they displayed considerable hostility towards other tribes such as the Bora and Okaina. All accounts agree with Casement when he states:

> Putumayo Indians were not only divided tribe from tribe, but within each tribe more or less constant bickerings and disunion prevailed between the various "families" or "naciones" into which each great branch was split up. Thus, while Huitotos had a hereditary feud with Boras, Ocainas (sic), or Andokes, the numerous subdivisions of the Huitotos themselves were continually at war with one another.[79]

The causes of these seemingly constant "wars" or feuds are less clear.[80] Kidnappings and thefts of women, together with the desire to take prisoners and to seek vengeance against enemy shamans, whose sorcery was presumed to be the cause of all sickness and unnatural death seem to be among the more important causes of strife between nations.[81]

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78 See Whiffen, The Northwest Amazons, 64-67; Steward, Handbook, Vol. 3, 755-756; and Farabee, Indian Tribes, 137.

79 Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 26. See also Steward, Handbook, Vol. 3, 756; and Whiffen, The North-West Amazons, 118.

80 "Wars", Casement's term, might be a little strong as these confrontations did not usually result in a large number of deaths. "Feuds" is probably a better term as they could and can be long-lasting and the initial cause often becomes irrelevant, each death simply creating the need for another death.

81 Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 26; Steward, Handbook, Vol.3, 756; and Whiffen, The North-West Amazons, 118.

While Casement, true to his romanticized image of the Indians, described these wars as "never bloodthirsty," Whiffen sees them quite differently. He states that the preferred means of attack was a stealthy surprise attack at night, most successful if the enemy could be killed while they slept. He continues, "Should the victorious attackers be in a blood-thirsty mood, every soul will be killed and the house burnt."[82] It must be remembered, however, that Whiffen, like most Europeans, saw the Indians as simple peoples, even savages in need of white-man's civilization. Also, since Whiffen and Casement were writing at a time after these Indians had some contact with whites, it is hard to determine how this contact affected inter and intra-tribal relations. Ann Golob, in her study of the influences of Jesuit missionaries in the Amazonian province of Mainas in the 17th and 18th centuries, argues that the Spanish were able to play on internal divisions and factionalism already present among the Indians, escalating tension as a result. An increase in violence was one of the first major outcomes of contact with the Spaniards.[83]

One thing is clear, however, that inter-tribal warfare did lead to prisoner capture and slavery. It seems that adult prisoners were often killed and perhaps ritually cannibalized.[84] Young prisoners were treated

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[82] See Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 26 and Whiffen, The North-West Amazons, 118.

[83] Ann Golob, The Upper Amazon in Historical Perspective, (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1982), 127.

[84] The whole question of cannibalism among the Huitotos and the other tribes of the area, or among all tribes of the Amazon for that matter, is one which is both fascinating and complex. Most travel accounts and early ethnographic accounts go into great detail of how these tribes would eat their enemies and even their sick and dying. Steward lists four possible motives for anthropophagy: to liken the enemy to animals by eating them; need of food; to acquire the qualities of the victim; and lack of salt. Handbook, Vol. 3, 756-757. While it is beyond

very differently. They were made into slaves. This "slavery", however, seems to have been quite different from the typical Western ideas of slavery. Apparently, these slaves were, in a sense, adopted by their captors. Whiffen describes slavery among the Indians in these terms:

> Slavery...is little more than a name, for a slave belongs to the chief, and soon becomes identified with his family. Though slaves have frequently a chance to run away they seldom do so, for they are usually treated with kindness, and probably are nearly as well off in the house of their victors as in their own.[85]

The fact that indigenous forms of slavery seem to have been very different from those introduced by western civilization, is indicative of the

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dispute that certain tribes did decapitate their victims and kept the head as a trophy (perhaps most famous are the Jívaros, but the Huitotos also kept trophy heads), most descriptions of cannibalism were based on second, third or fourth-hand accounts. Europeans have always been fascinated and terrified by the prospect of cannibalism among the natives of the New World, and their fascination and terror no doubt added to their own imaginings of such horror, and the embellishments of stories by the natives themselves. Some argue that the idea of cannibalism in the New World is more a product of the need to believe in barbarism and cannibalism in order to give meaning to one's own idea of "civilization." For this anti-cannibalism view see W. Arens, The Man-Eating Myth, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[85] Whiffen, The North-West Amazons, 69. See also Roberto Pineda Camacho, Historia oral y proceso esclavista en el Caquetá, (Bogotá: Fundación de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Nacionales, 1985), 40-41; and Paul Marcoy (pseud.), Travels in South America from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean, (London: Blackie and Son, 1875). Marcoy described the fate of child prisoners of war taken by another Amazonian group along the Ucayali River in the 1860s in the following terms: "The condition of these little prisoners of war is not so rigorous as one might suppose: they participate in the family life of their patron, have their place by the fire near the children of the latter, and when grown to manhood work with him for wants of the community ... Free to come and go, without apparently any other yoke than the habit which binds him to his masters, promptly oblivious of his birthplace and of the parents to whom he owed his life, without regrets for the past or uneasiness for the future, the idea of flight never enters his mind. The house he lives in has become for him at once home, country, and universe." 222-223. While the description is of another but similar area of the Upper Amazon, the ideas of slavery convey similar sentiments as Whiffen describes above among the Huitoto.

difference in social life and values the Indians held. While slavery denotes the exploitation of labour in order to increase one's productive capacity and, therefore, one's wealth, the idea of wealth in the form of material possessions or, quite possibly, any form, was quite foreign to the Huitotos and other Amazonian groups. Much of their time was spent in providing for their subsistence needs. Without the luxury of food preservers, such as refrigeration or salt which were non-existent or scarce, food procurement was a day-to-day occupation. Even with the addition of "slave labour", the concept of the "masters" not working was not viable under the circumstances. Mistreatment does not seem to have been part of their slavery as this would cause resentment and might adversely affect work performance. All members of the tribe work, and often together, often even the children. While it has been shown that hunter/gatherer/horticulturists in the Amazon basin can provide for their dietary needs leaving considerable amounts of leisure time, this time was not spent in a "productive" manner in western terms. Rather, resting or visiting friends and relatives often occupied ones "idle" hours.[86] This type of behaviour helped reinforce kin group bonds which

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[86] Bergman, Amazon Economics, 203. Comparisons with Bergman's study must be made carefully as he is dealing with a different group, in a different though similar geographical area, at a different time. Some of his conclusions, however, may be useful to consider. Bergman shows that based on a work day of 3.4 hours per day for men (47% of which is for food procurement) and 4.4 hours per day for women (66% of which is for food procurement, processing and preparation) the Shipibo of Panaillo on the Ucayali River are able to provide 1,665 kilocalories and 67 grams of protein per capita daily, an ample supply. "Like the Shipibo's, the food procurement systems of other river peoples (past and present) provided sufficient reward that they had, and have, little incentive to become more efficient...They get what they need and life is not hard." 204, 212. Bergman was studying the Shipibo in the 1970s. While the Huitotos of the 1890s and 1900s would have been using stone tools, until acquiring metal ones, probably considerably more time was

was crucial to maintain the integrity of the community. Good relations between individuals of a community lessened the chance of discord and the use of sorcery against each other.

Material possessions, moreover, were limited. Few possessions other than those needed for food procurement, production and preparation were available or needed. Stone axes for chacra clearing and hunting and fishing gear for men; and baskets for collecting, pots and kitchen utensils for women, made up most of the Indians material culture. Wealth, if it may be called such, was the territory in which a group could hunt and farm, and the labour needed to provide for the community's needs. While the chief or shaman, often the same person, influenced and even directed the labour of the group somewhat, he did not control it or become richer materially than the rest of the community since wealth in a material sense had little or no meaning. His power was not that great. Rather, one of his key roles was to help maintain the community's relation to the land, the source of their existence, and relations between themselves and other groups which enabled them to survive. Relations with the environment and between themselves were maintained by developing traditions based on ideas of reciprocity, sharing and equitable exchange which took many forms, even sexual and food taboos. One could not live in harmony with one's environment if one abused it by putting too much pressure on its resources. The

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necessary for food procurement. But they most likely still had ample leisure time, and since life was not "hard", had little incentive to be more efficient and work harder. The whole concept of "work" in the above discussion is a difficult one because it seems that Amazonians groups do not conceive their daily activities as either "work" or "play" in western terms of thinking. The absence of a "sense" of "work" is very hard for us to imagine; but it seems they just "did" what they had to to survive without thinking about it in our terms of "work."

relationship between man and land, and consequently ideas of labour, contained a spiritual component quite foreign to western ideas.

As stated by Steward concerning the Huitoto: "Little information is available on concepts of supernatural beings."[87] Whereas Steward, as a westerner, talks of religion, shamanism and mythology separately in his discussion of the Huitotos, the concepts are much more intrinsically linked, vital ingredients of the native world view and to the way they live their lives. Instead of a world separated between the natural or man-made and that of the "heavenly", Native conceptions were much more fluid, less rigidly separated.

This world view is hard to understand and conceptualize as a 20th century westerner, and even harder to reconstruct for the time period we are discussing. Regardless, certain basic concepts of the native world view in the Putumayo at the turn of the century can be ventured. Due to lack of specific information on each group of the Putumayo it becomes necessary to talk of native "religion" in rather general terms. Whiffen uses the term "magico-religious system" to describe regional native religion and states: "So far as they believe in anything they believe in the existence of supreme good and bad spirits."[88] He talks of four kinds of spirits in which the natives of the northwestern Amazon area believed: the spirits of the dead, the spirits of living people (which were able to leave the material body), otherworld spirits and "spirits of, or in, all natural objects, animate and inanimate."[89] It is a belief in a whole panoply of spirits which is one of the fundamental differences between western and Amazonian religions. While Christianity imbues humans

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87 Steward, Handbook, Vol. 3, 760.
88 Whiffen, The North-West Amazons, 218.
89 Whiffen, The North-West Amazons, 224.

and God with the spirit or soul, the idea of the rest of the natural world containing some similar spiritual entity is foreign, and in fact, contrary to the notions of man and nature. Amazonian man does not make such a distinction.

To the natives of many tropical tribes the natural and supernatural world were and are much more closely linked and interdependent. As Nicolas J. Saunders expresses it in his book People of the Jaguar:

> ...there exists no strict dividing line between what we term the sacred and the profane, the natural and the supernatural, or between life and death. Whatever occurs in the physical world, whether it be illness, hunting success or good or bad luck, is seen as the result of spirit action...."[90]

Man and his world - the environment in which he lived, the plants and animals on which he depended to survive - were linked cosmically, religiously, because both contained spirits. This interconnectedness caused a very different relationship between man and his environment to develop. Unlike the Judaeo-Christian concept of man ruling over and subduing nature, it being created for his needs and pleasure, a much more holistic view of man and his world developed among Amazonian tribes like the Huitoto.[91] When one believes that all things are imbued with a spirit which can affect one's life, for the good or bad, one develops a more profound relationship with one's environment.[92] Saunders even goes so far to say:

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[90] Nicholas J. Saunders, People of the Jaguar: The Living Spirit of Ancient America, (London: Souvenir Press, Ltd., 1989), 111-112.

[91] It should be noted that this relationship between man and nature is not held by all Jews or Christians but I believe the effective separation and ranking of man above nature is an idea common among Christians.

[92] This does not mean that the Indians had a conscious "eco-friendly" mindset, popular in today's parlance. Rather the Indians had over the millenia learn to adapt to their environment in a sustainable

> ...the everyday life of the inhabitants of the jungle, and the myths, legends and religious beliefs which serve to integrate them with their surroundings, stem, as one would expect, from the environment itself and the constraints which it imposes on human societies.[93]

When the everyday life of these people, like the Huitotos, is disrupted, as it was during the rubber era, the connections between themselves, their beliefs and their environment become strained, and their world becomes unstable. If, for instance, agricultural work is not carried out properly due to lack of time, their connection with the earth and the spirits which provide them sustenance is disrupted, leading to poor crops and possibly starvation.

In a study of the Tukano Indians of the Colombian Northwest Amazon, an area similar to that of the Huitotos and other groups of the Putumayo, G. Reichel-Dolmatoff argues that the Tukano's cosmology or world-view is directly related to the carrying capacity of the environment in which they live. Not only had they developed

> highly adaptive behavioural rules for survival - framed within effective institutional bodies - but, more important still,...a coherent belief system, with a foundation of strongly motivating values which would make endurable the problems of man's existence in an unpredictable world.[94]

According to Reichel-Dolmatoff, the Tukano have developed a world view, complete with expressive cosmological myths, that recognizes a "procreative energy," originating from the Sun-Father, which "flows

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manner, a manner that did little permanent damage to their surroundings. That Indians could overexploit resources is clear but having developed a semi-nomadic lifestyle and controlled population, they could move to new areas leaving old areas alone to recuperate.

[93] Saunders, People of the Jaguar, 108.

[94] G. Reichel-Dolmatoff, "Cosmology as Ecological Analysis: A View from the Rain Forest," Man, 11 (1976), 308.

continuously between man and animal, between society and nature."[95] It is this energy which binds man and nature into one cosmological whole.

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[95] G. Reichel-Dolmatoff, "Cosmology", 310. Another example of this interconnectedness between man and nature is discussed by social anthropologist, Kaj Arhem in "Dance of the Water People", Natural History, Jan., 1992, 46-53. In it he discusses the threat to the Makuna people's traditional culture in the southeastern corner of Colombia, north of the Putumayo region, due to gold mining in the area. "Gold and the the light it contains illuminate the Makuna world and allow the shaman to see beyond the appearances of things into the world of spirits." The gold is sacred and belongs to the spirits of the hills and should be left where it is. The hills play an important role in Makuna cosmology: "They are the stone pillars at the edge of the world that hold up the sky, the posts of the cosmic long house. They are also looked upon as petrified ancestral beings, mythical heroes that created the world and maintain all life on earth." "According to the Makuna, the hills at the margin of the world form a protective wall against the forces of evil on the outside. As miners penetrate into their world and take away their gold, the Makuna feel increasingly threatened. The vision of the shaman is blurred, his powers weakened." For Makuna elders, gold mining is a sign of an impending catastrophic end of the world, and the new world will have no place for the Makuna. In recent years, due to the increasing threat to Makuna cultural identity, The Spirit Dance has been performed with increasing frequency. It is a feast and ritual exchange. Visitors, who are costumed dancers impersonating animal spirits, receive food, drink and shaman-blessed coca and snuff from the host group. The exchange helps maintain relations between different groups of people but is also symbolic of the relationship between people and animals. "People eat the meat and fish, which come from nature, while animal spirits receive the fruits of the peach palm, which are cultivated, harvested, and processed by humans. This exchange expresses the idea that people and animals depend on each other for their survival and reproduction." In fact, the Makuna "believe that in another dimension of reality, all animals are people...(and) are grouped into communities inhabiting particular territories and also have their headmen, or 'masters of the animals.'" Before a hunting or fishing trip, the shaman negotiates with these animal headmen, offers them spirit foods, coca and snuff, and is promised fish and game in exchange. This relationship of reciprocity is similar to that between different groups of people, particularly between groups that intermarry. "...just as the (this) exchange of women is essential for the reproduction of society, the symbolic exchange with nature through hunting, fishing, and dancing, is essential for the continuous fecundity of nature." The connection between man and nature is even closer in that "in the vision of the shaman, the migrating fish are actually the souls of the deceased and of the generations to come....and since fish and game

Man must be careful not to upset the balance of this circuit of energy. Consequently, the Tukano have developed an elaborate belief system which helps maintain a balanced cosmos. Hunting and eating taboos, common among Amazonian tribes, ensure that over-harvesting of fish, animal or vegetable resources does not occur as this would severely affect the energy balance of their world. Sexual taboos as well as the organization of exogamic groups linked by alliances and the exchange of wives and resources during highly formalised rituals, dances and songs, also help to maintain balance in the cosmos. When these taboos are not followed ecological problems which affect society as a whole ensue: over-harvesting threatens the carrying capacity of the environment; breach of sexual taboos can cause problems within the society due to population increase; and socially disruptive behavior between tribes could increase.

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animals in a sense are the unborn future generations of people, ritual dancing also insures the fertility of humankind." Gold mining is threatening an area along the Triara River, where the Makuna believe the waters were poisoned by the ancestral beings; an area whose shores were never meant to be inhabited, and its fish never meant to be caught. "There are other such places in Makuna territory - river sections and streams - where fishing is prohibited on religious grounds and which serve as nature preserves of a kind." It is clear, therefore, that where some might see the Triara River area as a means to gold and quick profits, to the Makuna, the gold, the hills and the animals of the area are a vital and intrinsic part of their world and world view. While it is impossible to say with certainty, it is quite likely the Huitotos and other groups of the Putumayo area, had developed similar beliefs and myths about their land and their place within it.

The outcome of social problems caused by the imbalance of energy in society - or put another way, by the offending of animal spirits, the spirits of other people, or supernatural spirits such as the mythical "Master of Animals" - is usually illness. As Reichel-Dolmatoff states: "...illness is always interpreted as a quite natural consequence of a person's breach or neglect of cultural norms."[96] Illness is the concern of the shaman. For the Tukano, the shaman's "main concern is about the relationship between society and the supernatural Masters of game, fish and wild fruits, on whom depend success in harvesting and who command many pathogenic agents."[97] It is the maintenance of balance of energy in the Tukano world which preoccupies the shaman and therefore, through his ministrations, he interferes directly in hunting, fishing, gathering and most other harvesting activities. In fact, "most shamanistic activities such as curing rituals, rain-making, the periodic reaffirmation of alliances or food exchange between exogamic groups might be viewed as rituals concerned with resource management and ecological balance."[98] To the Tukano, when the shaman goes into narcotic-induced trances to discover the cause of an individual's illness, he is not only looking to cure the individual but, more importantly, he is trying to discover a way to rebalance society and the world.

> Man is taken to be a part of a set of supra-individual systems which - be they biological or cultural - transcend our individual lives and within which survival and the maintenance of a certain quality of life are possible only if all other life forms too are allowed to evolve according to their specific needs, as stated in cosmological myths and traditions."[99]

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96 G. Reichel-Dolmatoff, "Cosmology," 314.
97 Ibid., 315.
98 Ibid., 316-317.
99 Ibid., 318.

For the Tukano and other Amazonian tribes the shaman was and often still is the tribe's link to the world of spirits which joined the human, both the living and the dead, with the rest of the natural world in one cosmic reality. Again, Saunders states it well:

> In the Amerindian jungle-world, the spheres of earth, sky and water, of times past, present and future, are all intricately entwined, controlled by ambivalent spirits and ancestors ... Only the shaman has the supernatural ability to journey in 'magical flight' to the other world in order to converse with the all-powerful spirits, and so upon his shoulders lies the burden of making sense of life. It is the shaman who claims to be able to rationalise the irrational by controlling the dangerous forces of supernature.[100]

It is in this sense that the shaman is a social agent. He (or sometimes she) is essential in order that society maintain contact with its ancestors and maintain its link with the creation of the world and the order of the universe. That is, the shaman is essential for his group's continuing sense of identity. Anything that might disrupt or jeopardize this interconnectedness, like the intrusion of whitemen and imposition of their ways, would have a serious affect on a group's spiritual and material world.

These "magical flights" to the other world, in the form of trances or seances, are often accomplished with the aid of certain hallucinogenic drugs common to the Amazonian area. The most common of these hallucinogens in the Amazonian area is yage or ayahuasca which contains the hallucinogenic alkaloid harmine.[101] The shaman makes a

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100 Saunders, People of the Jaguar, 109.

101 See Marlene Dobkin de Ríos, Visionary Vine: Psychedelic Healing in the Peruvian Amazon, (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1972), 22. This substance, variously known as natema among the Jívaro Indians, yage in Colombia, caapi in Brazil, and ayahuasca in Peru, is prepared from the vine Banisteriopsis caapi. See also Saunders, People of the Jaguar, 123.

kind of narcotic tea with the leaves and twigs of this vine, often mixing in other plants, to make an intoxicating beverage full of powerful alkaloids. The result is a strong trance-like state, often described as similar to the effect of LSD. Although it seems that the Huitoto did not use yage in rituals as did many other tribes further up the Putumayo, they did use other narcotics such as tobacco and coca.[102]

The Huitotos used liquid tobacco for their "chupe de tabaco" ceremony, a ceremony which had strong social meaning.[103] While the function of the chupe del tabaco as a form of identity confirming ceremony in which shamans were intimately linked will be discussed later, it is important to keep in mind that:

> To the Western mind the native inhabitants of the Amazon live in two worlds - the natural and the supernatural - but for the Indians themselves no such concrete distinction is made. The ritual use of hallucinogens reveals itself as firmly embedded in the culture and world-view of their societies, as

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[102] Taussig states that the Huitotos did not carry out yage rituals which the Cofans, Sionas, Coreguajes and Inganos did further up the river. Shamanism, 386. While this may be true it is based on earlier travellers' and missionaries' accounts who most likely did not participate in the rituals but were merely observers from afar. Since yage "teas" often consisted of a mixture of ingredients it is difficult to say with certainty that the Huitoto did not use yage at all. Charles W. Domville-Fife, in his Among Wild Tribes of the Amazons, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co, 1925) mentions the use of yage, which allowed telepathic communication, in the "land of the Witotos" but he is unclear as to which tribe used it. 229. Tobacco juice, however, was another narcotic used not only by the Huitoto but by other Amazonian groups as well. The Adawaio Indian shamans of Guyana drink tobacco juice in large quantities in order to gain the help of the Kumalak Bird, the spirit from which the juice comes. The tobacco or the "Kumalak Bird lift the shaman's soul upwards and takes it on its celestial journey." It is on these celestial journeys that the shaman is able to find the cures for the illnesses of individuals and society. See Saunders, People of the Jaguar, 116.

[103] Dobkin de Ríos points out that healers or shaman may use a tobacco that has a hallucinogenic effect and creates feelings of dizziness. This particular kind of tobacco, containing Nicotiana tabacum, is "grown in the rainforest (and) is several times stronger in effect than similar species grown in North America." Visionary Vine, 31.

> an integral part of their vision of the universe and the complex web of beliefs which bind it and give it meaning.[104]

It is into this vastly different world and world view that the first major group of white Europeans entered and it is to the types of contacts and processes that ensued that we now turn our attention.

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104 Saunders, People of the Jaguar, 126.

CHAPTER THREE

Early Contacts: The Missionaries

The type of labour system established by the Peruvian Amazon Company in the Putumayo region of the Upper Amazon had some precedents based on the experiences of the missionaries that ventured into the Upper Amazon in the 17th and 18th centuries. Although the use of force was more extreme during the rubber boom and it is hard to determine exactly when some of the practices to utilize native labour were first instituted, it is clear that these practices had been present for decades if not centuries. Moreover, the correlation between the presence of whitemen and the use of violence among the tribes of the Upper Amazon can be traced back to the early explorers.

Contact with Amazonian tribes of the Upper Amazon area began early with one of the most famous being the exploration of Gonzalo Pizarro and Francisco de Orellana from 1539-1542 down the Napo River, just south of the Putumayo.[105] Other explorers went down the Amazon throughout the sixteenth century, perhaps the most infamous being Lope de Aguirre. It is impossible to assess the impact of these initial contacts with Amazonian tribes as they were often fleeting and it is certainly not clear which native tribes were contacted. These contacts, however, were

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105 Actually the first expedition down the Marañon river was the little known journey of Alonso de Marcadillo and Diego Núñes in 1538-1539. They however only travelled along the Huallaga river and a small part of the Upper Marañon and "did not reveal much about the nature of their relationship with (the Indians they met)." See Ann Golob, The Upper Amazon in Historical Perspective, (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1982), 135. Out of the Pizarro-Orellana expedition it was only Orellana with 58 men who went down the Napo-Amazon all the way to the Atlantic coast. Pizarro wandered around the Coca River before eventually finding his way back to Quito.

often full of tension and hostility as the explorers, usually looking for some lucrative product such as cinnamon or gold, raided villages for food and provisions they were unable to obtain themselves.[106] Some peaceful exchanges did occur, usally in the form of glass beads, tin horns, combs, knives, scissors and bells for food. Most contacts, however, with natives were disruptive acts of confusion and hostility, made often worse by the mysterious arrival of some unknown disease, either preceding or following the arrival of whitemen, which in the Indian mind represented some force of evil: illness being associated with sorcery or imbalance with the world.[107] These early expeditions were spurred on by the reports of riches and large populations that could be exploited

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[106] David Patrick Werlich, in his The Conquest and Settlement of the Peruvian Montaña, (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1968), points out that during Gonzalo Pizarro's 1541 expedition in search of cinnamon, Pizarro burned some Indians alive. 83-84. This type of punishment was also used by the Peruvian Amazon Company, see Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 99. The chronicle of The Voyage of Francisco de Orellana Down the River of the Amazons, 1540-1541 by Antonio de Herrera in Expeditions into the Valley of the Amazons, 1539, 1540, 1639, Clements R. Markham, trans., ed., (New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.) often mentions how Orellana and his men would invade villages for provisions and it seems a lot of their time was spent repelling Indian attacks. 20-34.

[107] Werlich mentions smallpox that arrived in Peru between 1523-1526 from Central America. He also mentions a very infectious disease which affected the mouth, throat and nose and caused skin decay and general disfiguration called "mal de los Andes." He points out that during the sixteenth century exploration in the Amazon region decreased due to a decrease in native population and lack of economic incentive to explore and exploit the area. His population figures for the Amazon region are a tentative high of 9 million in 1520 to a low of 825,000 in 1620. See pages 134-147. See also Golob, 139. Denevan in The Native Population of the Americas in 1492, gives a more conservative estimate of 6.8 million for the Amazon area in 1492, with a low estimate of 5.1 million if one considers the possible effect of buffer zones, no-man's-lands of unoccupied territory between hostile tribes. See pages 229-234.

through encomiendas.[108] While it seems that large scale capture of Indians did not occur during the first few explorations, Pedro Ursua, fellow explorer of Lope de Aguirre in 1560-61, did capture Indians to serve as interpreters, a practice that would continue for centuries. While metal instruments could have an impact on a tribe, by making land clearing or warfare with another tribe easier, for example, there is insufficient documentation to assess how much, if any, of a shift in lifestyle or culture or both occurred.

By the second half of the sixteenth century explorers were looking for gold in the Indian provinces of Quijos, Sumaco and La Canela, west of the Putumayo, with contact between the Spanish and natives being less than mutually beneficial, as the following description at the time indicates:

> The blackest of legends is supported by the atrocities reportedly committed by the Spaniards in this remote region. The wives and daughters of the warriors were taken by the Europeans. Indians were killed without reason, and the food supplies of entire villages were seized, leaving the natives to face grim deaths.[109]

The early Spaniards' treatment of the Indians led to Indian rebellions like the Jívaro rebellion of 1599 in which many Spaniards were pushed out of Upper Santiago. Rebellions continued in the Sibundoy Valley (upper Putumayo) and elsewhere in the upper reaches of the Amazon tributaries throughout the latter sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries due to mistreatment of the natives by Spanish settlers. According to an early chronicler, Father Chantre y Herrera, the early Spanish settlers abused

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108 Encomiendas were grants given to conquistadors and early settlers that gave them the right to the labour and tribute collection of a group of Indians in a certain area. The grant holder was called the encomendero.

109 Werlich, The Conquest, 164.

the Indians, treated them like slaves and neglected their duties as encomenderos to instruct them in the Christian faith.[110] It must be remembered however, that while these early contacts with Indians were mostly within the montaña area of the Amazon basin, that is, the eastern edge of the Andes, sporadic contact in the lowland areas of the Amazon did occur throughout the sixteenth century. Golob points out that contacts were made through the initial explorations, "slave-raiding ventures made by Spaniards who settled the surrounding montaña regions, and from 'entradas' made by the Spanish settlers in Mainas...."[111]

Europeans followed the rivers, however, and by the first half of the seventeenth century this area was infiltrated by the first major group of Europeans to try and establish permanent relations with the natives of the area. These Europeans were often missionaries. In fact, it seems that the first European to navigate the Putumayo River was a Jesuit father, Rafael Ferrer, sometime in the first two decades of the seventeenth century.[112] Missionary activity began with the establishment of Jesuit missions in Mainas, the area which included

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[110] Chantre y Herrera as found in Werlich, The Conquest, 169-170.

[111] Golob, 119. Golob defines "entrada" as an "organized military expedition to conquer new regions." xiv.

[112] Werlich, 172. Golob points out, however, that the first lowland Spanish settlement was established in 1619, "along the lower Marañon River, in what was to become known as Mainas...Don Diego Vaca de Vega had received permission from the Viceroy of Lima to establish a settlement named San Francisco de Borja in the lowland region and to be named governor of all the territory he could conquer." The settlement did not fare well, however, with the subsequent governors living in Quito, and the number of Spaniards decreasing "as a result of no great wealth or produce being found and only a small garrison of soldiers remained in the town during the 18th century." The Upper Amazon, 122-123.

much of the jungles of present day eastern Ecuador and Peru.[113] Franciscans were also present, particularly in the western montaña of central Peru.

What is important, however, is not the mere presence of missionaries in this area of the Amazon basin but rather the type of relationship they had with the natives and the mechanisms involved in this relationship. From the outset it is clear that the role of missionaries in this area, and indeed throughout the Spanish American colonies, was not strictly a religious one. As Franciscan historian Antonine Tibesar puts it:

> The Religious who came to Peru...not only were to act as missionaries, but they were also to be agents in the conquest of the country.... While Pizarro was to conquer and secure the land militarily, the religious and, to a lesser extent, the diocesan clergy were to conquer the hearts and the minds of the natives and to introduce among them the religion and the culture of Spain.[114]

Religion was the prime mover but missionary activity was also designed to secure the frontier by pacifying the hostile tribes, and to facilitate the eastward expansion of European settlement. In Ann Golob's study of the Jesuit missions of the Mainas area of the Upper Amazon, she challenges

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[113] Ann Golob states that the area called Mainas "has been used to refer to differing sections of the Peruvian and Ecuadorian jungle by the Jesuits, the colonial government, and currently by the Peruvian government." Golob used the Jesuit definition of the area which included all the jungle lands east of the Pongo de Manseriche on the Marañon River (the name given to the Amazon above the confluence with the Ucayali River), including the major tributaries that flow north and south into the Marañon and the Amazon: the Morona, Pastaza, Nucuray, Tigre, Nanay, Napo, Huallaga and Ucayali. Although the Putumayo is not included here, and was just outside the Jesuit normal sphere of operation, the Putumayo area is similar geographically and, as will be clear later, was influenced indirectly by missionary activity. See The Upper Amazon, 33-34.

[114] Antonine Tibesar, Franciscan Beginnings in Colonial Peru, (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1953), 35.

the romanticization by many historians of the colonial missionization of Amazonian Indians, who "assume that the missions provided a stable economy and safety for the Indians from the Spanish encomenderos."[115] By using uncensored documents, written for internal consumption within the religious order, she found that the missions were not the system of paternalistic goodwill many had previously thought. Rather,

> ...the missions were dependent on gaining new converts through the continual raiding of indigenous settlements away from the rivers in the interior....The mission villages established by the Jesuits further promoted factionalism, hostility and distrust by dividing the Indians into those who supported the missionaries and served as their confidantes, and those who attempted to defy the rigid structure laid out by the Jesuits. The development of intense factionalism and hostility both within the mission villages and between mission and non-mission regions reordered the nature of indigenous social life.[116]

What is meant by reordering and how did this "reordering" occur and why? To answer these questions we must explore the reasons the missionaries were in the area, what they were trying to accomplish and how, and why the missions ultimately failed or at least failed to meet the goals of the missionaries. We will also see that some of the ways the missionaries tried to "reorder" the Indians lives were present during the rubber era.

As has been mentioned, the missionaries were in the Upper Amazon area, and the New World as a whole, to not only bring the the Gospel to the Indians, but to also imbue them with the culture of Europe. To be Christian was also to be European. Olive Dickason, in her book The Myth of the Savage, correctly points out that Europeans upon contact with Amerindians assumed a natural superiority due to their

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115 Golob, The Upper Amazon, 2-3.
116 Golob, The Upper Amazon, 3-4.

own ideas of civilization and barbarity. The Europeans possessed superior technology, political organizations based on the state, and the belief that they believed in the only true God.[117] These ideas, coupled with the belief that man was to dominate nature and Christians were to dominate the world helped shape not only the early actions of the conquistadors but also the actions of the Jesuits in the Upper Amazon in the 17th and 18th century. While the Jesuits would not slaughter Indians as some conquistadors had, they used their own type of force and coercion in their attempt to "civilize" or Christianize the Indian.

Connected with this idea of superiority of European civilization was the belief that the Amerindian was a savage exhibited by their nudity and apparent cannibalism. They were seen as savages without reason, order or a knowledge of God. They had no laws nor did they appreciate the true value of material possessions or ownership since they generally lived in a community based on kinship and reciprocity. They lived according to nature, in an unevolved state, and were often viewed as akin to the "Wildman", who to the sixteenth and seventeenth century European man represented "the negation of the Christian ideal, a folk version of Antichrist."[118] While nudity, which was associated with a state of savagery or nature and a lack of social order, was often used as an excuse to enslave Indians in the colonial period it was justified by the "true" and "good" intention, in the European mind, that these people had

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117 Olive Dickason, The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas, (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1984), see 24-38. Although Dickason's book focuses on the French Colonial experience, her early discussion deals with all European contacts with Amerindians, particularly the early Spanish contacts.

118 See Dickason, Myth of the Savage, 52-57, 65-72.

to be brought out of their barbaric state so they too could enjoy the benefits of (European) civilization and ultimately (Christian) salvation.

It was this view of the Indian that also permeated the missionaries of the Upper Amazon. They too saw the Indians in need of "civilizing", so that they would be extricated from their life of baseness and, in the view of most, evil. With the intentions of proclaiming salvation and bettering the lives of these savages they would descend the rivers into the jungle lowlands and begin their work. They entered the lowland region in 1636, a year after an Indian revolt at Santiago de Borja, at the foot of the Pongo de Manseriche, which saw 1000 Indians attack the town and kill nine of the encomenderos and their families. Borja had been established in 1618 in the hopes of bringing "more and more Indians under Spanish control by sending out expeditions to contact and pacify the Indians," and "to divide the already conquered Indians into encomiendas."[119] Gold was no longer the prime motivator, rather new regions were sought with large Indian populations whose labour could be exploited; and exploit they did. The revolt had been a response to the type of treatment the Indians had received at the hands of the encomenderos: "The Indians had encountered a ruthless group of men who killed them outright for disobeying orders, worked them to death in their fields and mills, and followed them if they fled to force them to return."[120] The

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[119] Golob, The Upper Amazon, 141. An encomienda, as defined by Golob, was "the right to collect tribute from a certain number of Indians who lived in a given locality." xiv.

[120] Golob, 144. Padre de la Cueva described how some Indians preferred suicide or infanticide rather than allowing themselves or their children to be captured by the Spanish. "The harsh treatment of the Indians...became well-known. Violence and terror reigned in and around Borga (sic), and Indians lived in fear of this fate befalling them." See "Relación de la Mision de Mainas por los Padres Gaspar Cujía y Lucas de

revolt led to a punitive expedition as soldiers were sent from Santiago de las Montañas.

The first two Jesuits to arrive in the Mainas area were Padre Lucas de la Cueva and Padre Cujía. They found the land in revolt because of the labour, personal service, tribute and extortions the Indians were subjected to at the hands of the Spanish. While de la Cueva requested that soldiers be barred from their missionary area because of the fear they instilled in the Indians, his request went unheeded and soldiers were a crucial part of the Jesuit mission strategy. The strategy was based on two devices: isolation and indoctrination, used in the forming of a reducción.[121] While their primary concern was to provide proper religious training they also had a very clear idea as to the economic and political structure their missions were to have. "The goal was self-sufficiency through establishing sedentary villages based on agricultural production and the raising of livestock."[122] These goals were not very compatible to people whose culture was based on a semi-sedentary, hunter-gatherer system. The Jesuits encountered problems immediately.

It quickly became clear that the soldiers were a necessary part of mission life as they were needed not only for the missionaries' own protection but also for the rounding up of Indians. On the whole, the Jesuits found that the Indians did not want to join the mission villages. Ann Golob summarizes nicely the different Indian responses:

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la Cueva. Borja," Archivo de la Compania de Jesús, Quito, 1640, Legajo 198: f9, as found in Golob, 142-143.

[121] See Nicolas Cushner, S.J., Review of, "The Lost Paradise: The Jesuit Republic in South America," by Philip Caraman. Thought, 1978 (53), 222. Golob defines reducción as a "forced resettlement of Indians to form a mission village under the guidance of a Padre." xvii.

[122] Golob, 124.

> Many Indians were initially attracted to the Spaniards and Jesuits, both out of curiosity and as a means to procure iron tools. Some groups of Indians, such as the Conibo, hoped to use their relationship with the Spanish settlers and Jesuits to gain control over the trade in iron tools and thus achieve a basis for ascendency over neighboring Indian settlements. Others, such as the Omaguas, sought out the Jesuits to protect them from Portuguese raids. And some, such as the Jeberos(sic)...accepted the Jesuits as protection from the Spanish encomenderos who had raided their territory on numerous occasions. The majority of Indians who joined the Jesuit missions, though, did so by coercion, not free will. The Padres sent out continual raiding parties to collect run-away Indians and any others they could find.[123]

Contrary to the popular notion, at the time, of the Jesuits as fearless men of God who sought out the lowly savage with nothing more than trust in God and the Bible, Father Samuel Fritz, the most successful missionary in the Mainas area, describes the most common procedure to begin the Christianization of the natives:

> To begin the conversion of any tribe, the only method possible is this: Organize a troop of Christian Indians, to which are joined, if there are any, some Spanish soldiers; these on the one hand, to defend the Christians, and on the other, to prevent them from committing atrocities. On encountering the savages, they are rounded up, and brought into the presence of the padre. The missionary tells them of his good intentions, and gives them some little gifts, such as hachets (sic), and they invite him to live in their village.[124]

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[123] Golob, 126-127. Golob uses much archival material, particularly letters and reports from Jesuit missionaries to their superiors. Much of this material had been inaccessible before Golob used it. She also analyses each mission's population trends finding that the missions had a hard time maintaining their numbers of Indians. See 281-299.

[124] From Santos García, "La Amazonia peruana y los Jesuitas," Mercurio Peruano, XVII (1942), 139, as found in Werlich, The Conquest, 182. Father Samuel Fritz is touted as one of the most "successful" missionaries due to the apparently large number (1000s) of Indians he baptized. Despite this "success" he made frequent requests for soldiers to be sent from Borja to quell "disturbances" of the Indians in the missions. Journal of the Travels and Labours of Father Samuel Fritz in the River of the Amazons between 1686 and 1723, Rev. Dr. George Edmundson, ed., (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1922), 5-23.

According to another experienced missionary, "if the Indians failed to respond properly to the missionary's persuasion, a demonstration of the power of the Spaniard's firearms usually made them more cooperative."[125] It seems Father Fritz, and probably most other missionaries, were affecting inter-tribal relations in ways they perhaps were unaware of, by giving tools to one group which would help them dominate another group.

Rather than preaching and conversion the major task of the missionaries in the area was recruiting Indians to the mission villages and then keeping them there. Quite often Indians were attracted to the missionaries through the allure of iron tools, which were very useful to them. Some groups used the tools to gain power for themselves by acting as middlemen between the Jesuits and other Indian groups. Iron tools not only made agricultural work easier but also increased one's hunting, fishing and military power. Often Indians came to a mission village only to receive tools and then returned to the jungle if the flow of gifts stopped or if they thought the tools were distributed unfairly among tribes. Regardless, once the Indians obtained the most useful gifts they often returned to their own homes. Force or a demonstration of Spanish firearms was usually resorted to in order to make the Indians more cooperative.[126]

The missionaries also used interpreters in their attempt to win over different Indian groups. The use of interpreters, often called viracochas in the Mainas area, played a fundamental role in the pacification process of the missionaries. The interpreters were usually young boys from

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[125] Werlich, 182.
[126] Golob, 153-154.

different tribes who were usually taken by force as one of the Padres describes:

> There are many languages in this area - a problem sown by the devil to make conversion of the Indians more difficult. The only way to surmount this difficulty is to seize a few boys of the tribe at unguarded moments in their fields or in their hunting grounds, in conformity with Royal Decree and to carry them off, profitably deceived, to our towns so that by being raised and communicating with those already Christianized they will subsequently serve as guides and interpreters to befriend the rest of their nations.[127]

These viracochas represented a group separate from the rest of the Indian population. They grew up in the mission villages and often became completely aligned with the interests of the missionaries; becoming "their 'right hand man', teaching the catechism and other aspects of Christian doctrine to the heathen, going out to capture runaway Indians, or punishing Indians in the missions."[128] These people often lived in a split world, being intimately connected with both the native and missionary world but often not being totally accepted in either. While they sometimes became a powerful figure among rebellious Indians, turning against the missionaries, they generally were distrusted and feared by other natives who saw them as allies of the foreigners. The role of the viracocha has proven to be a long lived one in the Amazon area as the Peruvian Amazon Company also made use of loyal young men and boys, whom they called muchachos, to help them control the natives of the Putumayo.

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[127] Golob, 154. Taken from a report from Padre Nieto Polo to the King about the Mainas missions and the Portuguese threat. Archivo General de las Indias, Seville, Quito 158:1735. Golob mentions in a footnote that she could not find the particular Royal Decree mentioned each time the Padres took an Indian to act as an interpreter. 183.

[128] Golob, 237.

Missionaries disrupted Indian life and had a strong social impact in many ways right from the moment of contact, and often even before, with the introduction of diseases and tools in the area that spread through the well developed trade links between different native groups. After contact, however, is when the most blatant and oppressive systems of cultural domination were attempted. Once a group of natives had been convinced or, more often, bribed or forced to join the missionaries, they were brought to a mission village. These villages were usually located on the edge of a major river which allowed better communication for the missionaries to the highland areas and other mission villages.[129] This meant that different interfluvial native groups had to be moved to new locations. What is more, many groups were split up with perhaps the chief and his family going to one mission village and the rest of the group going to another. Different tribes were often mixed and forced to live in the same mission village which rarely led to harmonious coexistence between tribes but reduced the possibility of Indian rebellion.[130] Interfluvial groups, more accustomed to a jungle meat diet often did not appreciate the riverine diet available at the missions where river-dwelling peoples lived. The unacceptable change in diet reflects the type of relationship different groups had to their own environment and how they utilized their surroundings. They reflected the "fundamental difference in the subsistence strategies of ...two groups, and the degree to which such differences were considered crucial characteristics of their society."[131] With different food taboos common among Amazonian tribes it is not surprising that different groups would look upon each

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[129] Golob, 210-211 and Werlich, 184.
[130] Golob, 222.
[131] Golob, 215.

other and the missionaries as "irrational" or even barbaric, particularly when one remembers the spiritual connections between the natural world and the Indian. Taking advantage of differences and animosities between tribes continued into the twentieth century as the Peruvian Amazon Company utilized different groups to their advantage, by putting members of one group as overseers of another group.

Since missionaries were in the jungle in order to create good Christians and also convert Indians to European ways of civilization, which included adopting certain modes of behaviour, they attempted to organize the Indians in a way that was compatible with these goals. While Indians were generally anxious to obtain and use iron tools this was so that their own methods of production would be made easier. The missionaries first hoped, however, that their mission villages would become self-sufficient and permanently sedentary. This was to be accomplished by establishing a carefully prescribed routine of work, worship, organized recreation and instruction. What quickly became evident was a difference in meaning and understanding of "self-sufficient" between the Indians and the missionaries. To the missionaries, getting the Indians to become self-sufficient meant producing a surplus, enough for the Indians, the missionaries themselves and their retainers. To the Indians, they had been self-sufficient before the missionaries arrived.

Work in the missions tended to alter the traditional system of labour of Amazonian tribes. As mentioned earlier, work was divided along gender lines. Men's primary role was to clear and burn the chacras and do the hunting and fishing; in some tribes they also did the weaving of generally palm-fiber and cotton articles, though this was often a women's job. Women did the planting, cultivating and harvesting of

agricultural goods and did the cooking and cleaning in and around the communal houses. The missionaries tried to institute a work regimen which did not match the normal indigenous system. Men were to work in the fields throughout the year, while women were usually relegated to the care of the home and the production of some craft goods. This effectively removed them from the field of production, losing the right to distribute the fruits of their labour and becoming more dependent on their husbands for their subsistence needs.[132]

One of the major alterations in the way of life of the Indian that occurred in a mission village was a change in the amount of work one was expected to do, and concomitantly, a decrease in the amount of leisure time available.[133] Although certain tasks were often done communally among Indian tribes, such as erecting communal houses, clearing chacras and some hunting and fishing, the missionaries introduced a type of "mita" system of labour, a type of rotating labour system used by the Incas.[134] While communal tasks previously had been undertaken due to the subsistence demands of the community, the "extra" mita labour was for the upkeep of the missionaries, their retainers (often missionaries were accompanied into the jungle by Jesuit brothers, or Spanish and mestizo servants brought from the sierra) and any sick or new arrivals to the village. This extra burden added to their own subsistence needs - despite the time saving factor of iron tools - and

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[132] See Werlich, 189 and Golob, 227 and 263. Golob also points to the fact that only men were taught Quechua, the "lingua franca" of the region, as another way in which women became increasingly dependent on their husbands as they relied on their husbands for information about and communication with the larger world. 263.

[133] Werlich, 189

[134] See Golob, 227-228 and Werlich, 189.

most likely affected intra-tribal relationships, such as the development of kinship bonds and reciprocity arrangements, that were cultivated and strengthened through communal labour, gift-giving, food sharing and visiting. Moreover, since sharing is taken for granted among many Amazonian groups, the "non-sharing'" missionaries would be seen as greedy, actively anti-social and a threat to "normal" society. In other words the "health" of their society would be affected. This extra labour would be intensified during the rubber years.

The missionaries also tried to impose a stricter village and political structure on the Indians. The missions were designed following clear ideas of structure and order, cornerstones of Jesuit training and guiding principles. They also followed the plan of Spanish towns in the New World, with a central clearing or "plaza" surrounded by the church, a meeting hall, a school and the houses of the priest and the cacique or chief. The Indians' huts were located around these principle buildings. While Werlich describes the mission village as "simply an Indian-style village with a central clearing or 'plaza,'" he fails to appreciate the dynamic involved in the restructuring of the social world implicit in a change in village structure.[135]

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135 See Golob, The Upper Amazon, 223 and Werlich, The Conquest, 184. Golob and Werlich disagree over the choice of location for a mission village. Werlich states that "often the old Indian village was on a suitable site, and could be transformed easily into a reducción." 184. But Golob goes on to say: "Rarely did the missionaries in Mainas consider a native settlement an appropriate site for a mission village. Instead, the Indians were brought to a site chosen by the missionary. This resettlement had a number of advantages for the missionaries: it located the new settlement where it was most needed in relation to the rest of the mission system; initially it separated those Indians interested in joining the mission from those who were not; and the organization of the village structure could be laid out according to the specifications of the Padre rather than being tied to the indigenous format." 191-192. It is clear the Padres had a well thought out plan of pacification and

Many Indian groups lived in large communal houses, including the chief. With separate housing for the chief and other large non-traditional buildings such as the church, new associations of prestige, wealth and power were given concrete form and were bound to have an effect on the tribe's social character. The size and degree of ornamentation on the church was also an attempt to emphasize power and to be "mysterious, a combination of earthly power and mystic authority, designed deliberately to produce awe and fear in the minds of the native people."[136] This was in great contrast to the much more egalitarian communal housing of most Indian tribes. As well, when one's "house" is conceived as a "replica" or "model" of one's cosmos, any change in its structure affects one's image of that cosmos and one's place within it. Surely, the moving and changing of the Indians' villages were far more traumatic than the missionaries could have imagined or, perhaps, intended.

Village government was another aspect of village life that changed dramatically with the missionaries. The missions were designed along a strict hierarchical structure based on the Spanish model of the times. "The primary role of the local government was to mete out punishment, organize the 'mita', and perform other tasks that the missionary needed but did not want to do himself."[137] Briefly, the government was composed of a governor, who was usually the local chief, and was assisted by a cabildo, or town council, whose members were chosen by

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conversion and this included where a mission village should be located. While some Indian villages may have fulfilled their plans, many villages were inland, away from the rivers, and were no doubt moved to suit the Padres' intentions.

136 Nicolas Cushner, Lords of the Land: Sugar, Wine and Jesuit Estates of Coastal Peru, 1600-1767, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 177.

137 Golob, 238.

the missionaries. The governor and cabildo organized and maintained the militia which all men between 18 and 50 were required to join. The militia's main duties were to protect the mission from "heathen" Indian attack and the Portuguese, and they participated in expeditions to recapture runaways and collect new Indians to join the mission. The use of Indians to catch other runaway Indians was also an important part of the labour systen in the Putumayo in the twentieth century.

In addition to government officials there were also ecclesiastical officials, the most important being the fiscales. These "served the missionary by being a source of information about local events in the village."[138] The person who held this position was often not trusted by other Indians, as they were seen as being agents of the Padres. Although native peoples occupied most posts in the governmental structure, "the padre was their chief council, the "jefe político" and the court of last resort."[139]

> The Jesuit mission villages introduced the Indians to these concepts of hierarchy and control in ways that had not existed for them heretofore. This created divisions among the Indians, most generally between those who had the authority to control others and those who were controlled.[140]

Creating divisions by instituting a hierarchy with its associated privileges (such as more food, tools, and other small gifts), and having different tribal groups in the same mission village, helped to make organization against the Padres difficult. By an increase in factionalism and the

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[138] Golob, 239-240. Golob defines fiscal(es) as "an ecclesiastical position in the mission village. Translated as 'intermeddler, prier.' They provided information about the personal lives of the villagers to the padre." There were also children informers called fiscalillos. xv.

[139] Werlich, 191.

[140] Golob, 241.

presence of informants (i.e. fiscales), large concerted uprisings became difficult to implement and Indians were more likely to flee the missions in small numbers.[141] Overall, mission populations remained in a constant state of flux, with Indians constantly fleeing due to: epidemic diseases that would periodically ravage missions; a general dislike of the overbearing structure of the mission and its strict regulations; and the fear of being attacked by the Portuguese or hostile non-mission Indians.[142] As mentioned earlier, disease among Amazonian tribes was and is often seen as the presence of an evil spirit or sorcery directed by another person, it is not surprising that an epidemic would therefore lead to a desire to leave those (i.e. the missionaries) who may be perceived as the source of this evil.

In addition to a different work regimen, with having to produce extra food and build and maintain other buildings for the missionaries, many other rules governed the life of natives in the mission villages. In accordance with the Christian values the missionaries were trying to instill in the different Amazonian peoples, punishments were meted out if rules and laws were broken. Theft, adultery, and polygamy were just a few offences that were punished in the mission villages. Theft was apparently a problem as "almost all the doors in the Padre's home and the church were to be kept locked as a precaution against robbery."[143]

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141 Golob, 243.

142 See Golob, 202. Raiding parties were recorded as early as 1661 on the Upper Amazon. Some Indians would seek protection from these raids at the mission villages but these were not immune to the raids. Father Fritz's journals record raids almost every year with the worst being in 1709-1710. Journal of the Travels and Labours of Father Samuel Fritz, G. Edmundson, ed., 119-127. In 1709, according to the archival records, 5040 Indians were taken by the Portuguese. Archivo General de las Indias/Seville, Quito 131: 1720, as found in Golob, 205.

143 Golob, 225.

This is hardly surprising since the concept of ownership in a European sense was foreign to tribes whose communal structure generally led to a common use of most resources. While certain items, such as a man's spears and bow and arrow, or a woman's cooking utensils were seen as one's own and usually buried or burnt with one at death, many articles, such as stone axes or canoes, were used communally due to their importance to the whole community.

Punishment for crimes against the European system the missionaries were trying to establish and enforce included the use of the lash. Werlich states that punishment in the missions was "said to be less severe than in the European communities of Peru." Usually ten or twelve strokes were given, but adultery earned a penalty of 25 lashes. Every mission seemed to have had a jail, some with stocks.[144] While the use of stocks and the lash were not unique to the missions, as they were commonly used by civilian Spanish towns in the sierras, they do indicate that the use of them was present in the Amazon region for a long

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144 Werlich, 191. Jane M. Rausch, in her book, A Tropical Plains Frontier: The Llanos of Colombia, 1531-1831, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984) notes the following when talking about the missions in the Llanos in the 17th and 18th centuries: "the fiscal would read out the faults committed during the week and administer punishment, which might be whipping, internment, or confinement in the stocks." 73. Anthony Wayne Stocks, in Los nativos invisibles: Notas sobre la historia y realidad actual de los Cocamilla del río Huallaga, Perú, (Lima: Centro Amazonico de Antropología y Aplicación Practica, 1981) states that in the 18th century, after the violations of the people (Cocamillas) were told to the priest, he would determine the punishment "which normally consisted of lashes and detention in a cell exposed to the sun for periods of 24 hours to 3 days." (...que normalmente consistian en azotes y detención en pequeñas celdas expuestas al sol por períodos que iban desde 24 horas hasta tres días.) 72. It is clear that Indians in many areas were not very good at behaving as the missionaries wished.

period of time, since they were still being used in the twentieth century.[145]

It should not be surprising that due to the nature of mission life - with its restrictions, epidemics, and constant fears of attack - that many Indians chose to flee and return to the jungle at some point. It was due to this chronic problem that the most time- and resource-consuming activity of the missionaries was the constant search for and recapture of runaways and the collection of new Indians in the process. The expeditions or entradas to capture runaways and other Indians occurred continously so that the missions could grow. For example, in an eleven year period Padre Widman reported 39 such expeditions which brought in 2713 Indians to various missions in Mainas.[146] While some Indians did come into the missions voluntarily, violence was the usual method for bring Indians into the missions. The missionaries would send out large groups (often over 100) consisting of mostly of Indian militia members, a few viracochas or interpreters and guides, with a rear and forward guard, spies and relays. The missionaries would also send a few Spaniards who carried firearms, for "without the advantage of these arms

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145 Victor Daniel Bonilla, Servants of God or Masters of Men?, (London: Pelican Books, 1972), states that the stocks or "cepo" was "a hangover from the Spanish encomenderos. It was made out of two horizontal bits of wood one laid upon the other, ten to twelve meters long. The instrument was used both to imprison the rare criminal, and to beat those who infringed the traditional Indian order." While Bonilla implies that it was an Indian invention, it is clear by its use in the missions and later by the Peruvian Amazon Company that it became an instrument to enforce the rule of the Spanish colonists. 39. I have not come across one source other than Bonilla that attributes the stocks to indigenous origins, so I remain skeptical and tend to think it is of European origin.

146 See Golob, 158-159 and Appendix F for a listing of each expedition, its date and the number of Indians captured. The figures are from Padre Pastells Collection, Madrid, Tomo 108 Cuadernos Negros, f. 47-67, 75-106, "Apuntes de las cosas mas memorables que pasan y pasaron en el Mision desde 1744," Padre Adam Widman.

the Indians in the militia stood little chance against unconquered Indians; but with them their force and capability was immediately increased."[147]

Violence was also used to quell the frequent rebellions and uprisings in the area.

> In 1664, some 10,000 Cocamas of the Ucayali rebelled; three years later, 3,000 Avigiras and 3,400 Oas of the Napo killed their missionaries and bolted their missions. The same thing occurred on the Ucayali in 1695, and in 1707, 7,000 Gaes of the Tigre and Pastaza rivers revolted.[148]

After the uprising of 1664, an expedition organized by Padre de la Cueva set out to punish the Cocamas for conspiring with the Chipeos and Magarinas to kill the Jesuits, the Spaniards and the Mainas Indians who served them. With a force of 400, they managed to capture some of the rebels and "the Padre ordered ten of the most important Indians who had organized the attack to be executed, of whom six were Cocamas."[149] The Chipeos, who apparently had been forced to take part in the attack with the Cocamas were not executed but exiled to another mission.

> Jesuit policy ther. was that any time a missionary was killed or Jesuit authority questioned, massive retaliatory attacks were organized by soldiers and fellow Jesuits to capture and

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147 Golob, 157-160. Rausch in A Tropical Plains Frontier, cites a source, Enrique Alvarado, who lived with the Jesuits in the Guyana missions for several years and stated "that despite all their talk of making entradas with love and persuasion, they routinely reduced the Indians with arms and soldiers. When the Indians tried to escape, they forcefully detained them." 71-72.

148 Santos García, "La Amazonia peruana y los Jesuitas," Mercurio Peruano, XVII (1942), 141, as found in Werlich, The Conquest, 193.

149 Padre Lucas de la Cueva, Informe de las misiones del Marañon, Quito, 1661, Archivo de la Provincia Toletana de las Sociedad de Jesús, Alcalá de Henares, (Madrid), Legajo 406, #179:f. 209-240 as cited in Golob, 161-162.

> hang the organizers of the uprising, and to forcibly take captives to found new villages.[150]

Although, according to Jesuit accounts, the Indians were often reacting to the excesses of the Spaniards who accompanied the missionaries rather than to the missionaries themselves, the fact that missionaries were killed (nine Jesuits were killed in the Mainas missions in 150 years) indicates that the missionaries were at least associated with Spanish excesses and most likely were themselves resented.[151]

In fact, it is quite clear that the missionaries often lived in fear of the Indians successfully rebelling and overrunning them. They maintained large militias in order to inflict fear and dissuade the Indians from revolting. The missionaries, however, also learned to moderate their stance on certain Indian practices they found abhorrent to the Christian faith. Practices such as polygamy, if not dealt with with patience could lead to disaster, as occurred with Padre Suárez who was killed in 1667 for apparently trying to wipe out the practice too quickly, before "having achieved authority over the Indians."[152] Generally, the Indians did not care for the type of authority the Padres tried to initiate in the missions.

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150 Golob, 163.

151 Golob, 164. Golob points out that not all the priests were resented but some were, as those who killed Padre Camacho, who had been "carried away by his zeal and tried to make good Christians of them by force too quickly." From Padre Adam Widman, Apuntes de las cosas mas memorables que pasan y pasaron en el mision desde 1744, Padre Pastells Collection, Madrid, Tomo 108 Cuadernos Negros, f.77.

152 Golob, 165. Father Fritz had this to say about the Indians when two of his priests hastily left one of the missions: "They were desirous of keeping up certain customs heathen and contrary to Chrisianity, and, as the Fathers carried away by their zeal were wishing to correct effectively this abuse, the Indians hastily came to spread about certain confused reports, that they would kill them, to see if they could thus frighten them, just as they had done also many times with me." Father Samuel Fritz, Journal of the Travels, G. Edmundson, ed., 105.

There seems to have been a continual desire to flee, yet a fear to attempt it due to the difficulty of finding safety outside the mission and the difficulty of organizing enough Indians to escape without the Padres hearing about the plan. According to Padre Magnin of San Francisco de Borja:

> The Indian's temptation to flee to the jungle is the most common thing that happens to those of this city. Their conversation is frequently on this subject; that if they flee they will go to such and such area, to such and such place; that they will live thus and so; that they would have such and such chacras, such and such weddings, such and such drunken feasts...and all the whims and fancies that occur to them.[153]

In fact, the Indians, when they voluntarily joined the missions, sought tools and protection from the brutality of the Spanish encomiendas and Portuguese slave raiders. Tools were not abundantly available, however, and disease and raids still occurred frequently so many, if not most, Indians fled the missions creating a constant in and out migration to and from the missions. Generally, the Indians were not truly interested in understanding Catholicism and the rules that regulated mission life were rarely compatible with their previous communal subsistence hunter-gather slash-and-burn lifestyle.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the conflict between Spanish civilians seeking and collecting natives to labour on their lands and the Jesuits who collected natives to labour on their missions had been won by the Jesuits of Mainas as the Spanish civilians showed a diminishing interest in the area.[154] It is clear the natives had little choice who they

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153 Padre Juan Magnin, Relación de las cosas notables de la ciudad de San Francisco de Borja el año 1740 hasta 1743, Papeles de Jesuitas Legajo 251, #3C, f.23, Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid, as found in Golob, The Upper Amazon, 167.

154 Golob, 150-151.

were to work for and when they did, their feet made their choice for them. By 1767, however, even the Jesuits vacated the area as their order was expelled from all Spanish territories. After the expulsion, the missions were taken over by secular priests, who in turn were replaced by Franciscans in 1774. During this period many Indians returned to the jungle. One secular priest who replaced the Jesuits "described the Indians as still being barbarians."[155] The Jesuits had failed in their desire to create Christians out of the Indians and economically self-sufficient communities out of their missions. While they blamed insufficient financial support from the King, lack of commitment from their superiors, competition from other orders and civilians, inhospitable conditions, Portuguese raids and even the death of the Indians from European diseases, it seems the biggest reason for their failure was the rebellious nature of the Indians due largely to the missionaries' use of force and intimidation.[156] The Indians were also rebellious because once they had obtained what they wanted - iron tools - and saw the Jesuits offered little more (not even protection from raids), they tried to leave.

Despite the Jesuits' failure their impact on the native population of the Mainas lowlands was dramatic. Populations were moved from inter-fluvial areas to riverine areas, disease ravaged groups in and out of

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155 Golob, 256.

156 See Golob, 256-261. Blaming the Indians themselves for dying of European diseases is nicely illustrated by the following quotation: "Our Indians have such an inclination to die that it takes little more than a single smell of a Spaniard for them to sicken and die." From Mauro Matthei, Cartas e informes de misioneros Jesuitas extranjeros en Hispanoamérica. Selección, Traducción, y Notas. (Santiago, Chile: Universidad Católica de Chile, 1972) Vol. 3, 254 as found in Golob, 260. The idea that the Indians were not robust and were doomed to extinction was a common one even during the rubber era.

mission villages, and tribes were split up and mixed with other tribes creating an increase in factionalism and hostility between tribes and within them, as members were treated differently in accordance with the new hierarchical authority structure the missionaries tried to impose.

Although the above discussion dealt with the lowlands of Mainas, an area of which the Putumayo represented an extreme periphery, the Putumayo belongs to the same lowland topography and shares its isolation. Through Victor Bonilla's study it also seems that the Putumayo shared some of the same processes of contact and conquest as Mainas. Bonilla talks of early abuses by encomenderos in the Sibundoy Valley, an upper-river tributary of the Putumayo. Native groups revolted against the encomenderos "whose greed knew no bounds in these isolated spots where Spanish law could not easily be enforced. Their abuses were not restricted merely to an outrageous exploitation of native labour, but went beyond the bounds of all human feeling."[157] Missionaries in the area gathered Indians in the same manner as in Mainas, and upon trying to impose certain rules, garnered the same results: rebellion. An eighteenth century priest had this to say about the Indians' attitude toward the missionaries: "if...'the Indians received and treated them well, it was only for fear of the men with harquebuses who came with them.'"[158] As in Mainas, both the settlers and missionaries exploited the Indians, particularly for their labour. Conversion became linked with the economic reality of the Spanish system, and as one 18th century chronicler stated:

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157 Victor Daniel Bonilla, Servants of God or Masters of Men?, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), 17.

158 Bonilla, Servants of God, 19.

> One of the principle reasons why conversions have become so hated by the infidels, now more than ever, is that they know that to accept our holy faith is to bow their heads and shoulder beneath the intolerable yoke of vassalage to those who are your Majesty's own unworthy vassals.[159]

This mistreatment led to uprisings that desolated towns like Ecíja de los Sucumbios and Mocoa and with the end of the encomienda system and tribute in the area in 1769, and the coming of independence the area lost political and economic value and returned to oblivion in the official documents.[160] There seems to have been little Spanish representation, Church or state, in the area through most of the nineteenth century, except for visits by passing merchants from Pasto who sailed along the Putumayo and the Amazon as far as Brazil and slave traders coming up the river from Brazil.[161]

While the missionary activity in the 19th century decreased in the Amazon lowlands, the goals and practices of those missionaries who remained were little changed from previous centuries. Laurent Saint-Cricq, writing in 1869, states that only nine missions remained in Peru from a high of nearly 150 in the mid-18th century. What is more telling,

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159 Bonilla, 19.

160 See Bonilla, Servants of God, 33. Bonilla supposes that "the history of areas like this was only recorded when related to the needs of the system of exploiting the Indians used in those early days: once the Indians no longer paid tribute, the State lost interest in them, and this, in conjunction with the disappearance of the Spanish doctrineros, left the valley out on a limb, so to say, as far as history was concerned until the nineteenth century."

161 Bonilla, Servants of God, 35. Missionary activity did not stop altogether in the upper Amazon area. In some places missions continued, and they continued to punish Indians "by flogging or confinement in the stocks," and the missions continued to decrease in population as Indians left them. See W.L. Herndon and L. Gibbon, Exploration of the Valley of the Amazon, (Washington: Robert Armstrong, 1853), Senate Report, 32nd Congress, 2nd Session, Exec. no. 36, pages 185, 206-207.

however, is his descriptions of the types of relations the missionaries enjoyed with their converts. Speaking of the Panos and the Conibos at the turn of the nineteenth century, Saint-Cricq points out how the missionaries were more successful in baptising the Panos, who were disliked and envied by the Conibos, who "prefer the worship of liberty and barbarism under the covert of the woods to the advantages of civilization in a Christian hamlet."[162] He goes on to state:

> If our predominant tastes, as some physiologists assure us, are to a certain point the very conditions by which we exist, it is conceivable that the persistency with which the Conibos retained their idolatry in spite of all opposing influences, was the reason that they still survived... The regimen of the Spanish missionaries in respect to the health both of the soul and body, was never very favourable to the indigene of Peru.[163]

The missionaries still used iron tools, fish hooks, needles, scissors and other similar goods as tools of conversion, but when these failed to produce the desired results other methods were employed. In the early nineteenth century, a particularly celebrated and successful missionary, Father José Manuel Plaza, recounted his techniques of converting the Indian:

> When I established myself at Sarayacu...polygamy was still practised by the neophytes; some among them had as many as five wives. By this example of the laxity of morals you may judge of the rest. To remedy this state of things I at once began to use the lash, and even handcuffs and irons. I chastised them with my own hands, vigorously and severely. Five-and-twenty strokes for a fault, fifty for a repetition of the same. God inspired me. At the end of one year of this regimen, my Indians had become as gentle as lambs.
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> In thus employing the discipline of the rod, I knew very well that I risked my life, and was therefore always on guard.

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[162] Laurent Saint-Cricq, (pseud. Paul Marcoy), Travels in South America from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean, (London: Blackie & Son, 1875), 20-21.

[163] Saint-Cricq, Travels in South America, 21.

> In a corner of my cell I had some pounded charcoal, an Indian sac (tunic), a bow and arrows, and a shooting tube. As the Indians never attack but by night, at the least noise that I heard I sprang from my bed, blackened my face with charcoal, put on the sac, took my bow and arrows and slipped out in the midst of my assailants, who, in the obscurity, took me for one of themselves.[164]

These two paragraphs not only reveal the "secret" to the success of one missionary but also is an ironic self-indictment of the missionary's view of the Indians, his fear of their presence and his actions toward them.

Saint-Cricq also gives many examples of the Indians' desire for and attempts at a reversion to their old ways of life. Those allowed to leave on a fishing and hunting trip, quickly shed their clothes, painted their faces and become "vagrants" as they "delightfully taste once more the joys of their barbarous past."[165]

The missionaries had a profound effect on the Indians of the lowland areas of the Amazon basin and yet the native Amerindians were able to flee, often with new tools, and retain much of their way of life. While by the nineteenth century many of the earlier attempts at Christianizing and pacifying the Indians had failed and many missions had been abandoned, the methods used by the missionaries would be repeated and even "improved". Force and terror would play a large part in the relations between white and Indian in the latter part of the 19th and early 20th century, by missionary and trader alike.

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164 Saint-Cricq, Travels in South America, 98. The description is taken from the memoirs of Father Plaza.

165 Saint-Cricq, Travels in South America, 113-114.

CHAPTER FOUR

Extraction and Labour

The activities of the missionaries were not the only, or even the worst, influences on the native peoples of the Upper Amazon but they did help create and perpetuate a system of labour exploitation that did not coincide with the values and ideas of "work" and material culture of the Indians of that area. The traders that plied the Upper Amazon waters were much more forceful in their desire and actions to use Indians as labour for their commercial interests. Before the rubber traders entered the area, it was the traders of quinine that continued the use of native labour, often against their will, to supply export market demands. A brief examination of the quinine traders reveals how important processes were continued into the rubber era and also how quinine collection differed in some significant ways from rubber extraction.

Although quinine's ability to reduce the effect of fever seems to have been discovered by Europeans in the seventeenth century (it most likely was already used medicinally by indigenous peoples), it was not until the nineteenth century that demand for it grew to a point that exploitation of the cinchona tree moved into the upper reaches of the Amazon basin.[166] Quinine comes from the bark and root of a number of

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166 See John Hemming, Amazon Frontier: The Defeat of the Brazilian Indians, (London: MacMillan London Limited, 1987), 281-282. Camilo Domínguez and August Gómez in La economía extractiva en la Amazonia Colombiana, 1850-1930, (Bogotá: Corporación Colombiana para la Amazonia - Araracuara, 1990) point out that quinine was used in the colonial period, particularly the second half of the eighteenth century, but its exploitation greatly increased from 1850 to 1883 when it reached 31% of Colombia's total value of exports for the period 1881-1883. See page 37.

species of the cinchona family of trees and was first harvested on the eastern slopes of the Andes in Peru. As demand for this drug grew so did its extraction throughout the Andean countries of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Since the tree was usually cut down and stripped of its bark and roots, new areas where the trees grew had to be constantly found. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, this meant the forests bordering the Caquetá and Putumayo rivers.

In 1875, Elias Reyes and Brothers (Elias Reyes y Hermanos) was granted exclusive rights of transport on the Putumayo and Amazon rivers by both the Colombian and Brazilian governments for 15 years. While they only exercised these rights until 1884 when the company was liquidated due to a drop in quinine prices they were the first company to use steamships on the Putumayo river.[167] It was during this time that the Reyes Co. came in contact with some of the indigenous groups of the Putumayo such as the Huitotos, Carijones and the Orejones, among others. Domínguez and Gómez describe how the Indians were enticed to work for the quineros:

> The system employed by the representatives of Elias Reyes and Brothers to capture an indigenous labour force on the banks of the Putumayo and its tributaries was through the exchange of metal tools (hatchets, machetes, knives, etc.), cloth, mirrors and other "witch trinkets" (brujerías) for meat, fish and other food supplied by the natives, and, in particular, for fuel supplied for the steamships.[168]

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[167] Some seeds and samples of the cinchona tree were smuggled out of Peru by Clements Markham, an employee of the British India Office, in 1854. The resulting plantations in India and the Dutch East Indies effectively slashed the price of cinchona bark and all but wiped out the wild cinchona trade by the early 1880s. See Hemming, 282.

[168] Domínguez and Gómez, La economía extractiva, 67. ("El sistema empleado por los representantes de la Casa Elias Reyes y Hermanos para la captación de la fuerza de trabajo indígena de las riberas del Putumayo y sus afluentes fué el del trueque o intercambio de

Some Indians were also employed in paddling canoes and navigating the rivers. With the economic opening of the Caquetá and Putumayo regions due to the quinine industry and the exploration of the territory due to the introduction of steamships, the demand for native labour increased greatly. Native labour became important to the "white" traders because they were better adapted to life in the forest having a greater knowledge of the jungle and how to survive in it.[169]

It is important to keep in mind the kind of relationship that developed between the quineros and these native groups and the kind of labour expected of the natives and the goods exchanged for this labour. Most of the Indians used were riverine natives who may have had some contact with whitemen before the influx of quineros. Most importantly, however, the actual collection of the cinchona bark was primarily done by hired labourers or enganche labourers from other areas of Colombia such as Cauca, Nariño, Boyaca, Tolima and the Atlantic coast.[170] This means that some of the labour expected of the Putumayan tribes may not have been so foreign to their culture. They supplied wood as fuel for the steamships, and while this was very difficult work, it would also create larger areas of cleared lands to plant more food crops which they also exchanged with the whites. While this obviously meant more work, the main items traded for were hatchets and machetes which would mitigate

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herramientas de metal (hachas, machetes, cuchillos, etc.), telas, espejos, y otras 'brujerías', en pago de carnes, pescados y otros alimentos suministrados por los nativos y, de manera especial, en pago por el abastecimiento de leña para los vapores....") "Brujerías" is an odd word in this context and I would suspect that the word might be mistaken for "bujerías" which translates as "trinkets or knick-knacks" which were common trade items.

169 Domínguez and Gómez, 74.

170 Enganche labour was a type of recruited labour, often enticed to sign on to work by an advancement of salary for a specified time.

the effect of this extra work. There is no indication, moreover, that this type of work took them away from their own chacras, something that cannot be said with the advent of rubber extraction as we shall see. Supplying meat and fish were again activities that the native peoples did even without the whiteman's trade goods.

It is quite clear, however, that despite doing work that was, in a sense, culturally neutral, that is cutting trees and planting and raising food crops, hunting and fishing, the Indians were often not pleased or even willing to do these jobs for the traders. With an increase in the number of whites in the area, heretofore uncontacted groups suffered greatly from diseases. Some, like the "Cosacunty" were all but wiped out by "galloping consumption" so that, according to Rafael Reyes, when the "savages" of the Amazon "heard a whiteman sneeze, they would run away in utter terror."[171] Those who found the steamships a curiosity and were lured onto them for a closer look sometimes found themselves in the middle of the river, kidnapped and moving quickly away from their home and kin, as was the case with a group of Montepa Indians of the upper Putumayo.[172] Quinine exploitation seems to have increased the trafficking in indigenous slaves as well, with the introduction of

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[171] Rafael Reyes, Memorias 1850-1885, (Bogotá: Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1986), 116 as found in Domínguez and Gómez, 74. ("...habia sido atacada la tribu por una especie de tisis galopante, que he observado que el hombre civilizado lleva a los salvajes de Amazonas, quienes le tienen tal horror que cuando oyen estornudar a un blanco, huyen despavoridos.") While it is clear that Reyes is refering to a group in the Putumayo area, the "Cosacunty" are not one of the main groups usually mentioned in the area. Probably the name represents one of the sub-tribes of one of the major groups like the Huitotos or Boras, or is a name given by the quineros which fell out of usage.

[172] Francisco María de Quito, Relación de viaje en los ríos Putumayo, Caraparaná y Caquetá y entre las tribus Guitotas, (Bogotá: Imprenta de La Luz, 1908), as found in Domínguez and Gómez, 75.

steamships more areas could be reached and exploited. Tribes were pitted against each other to collect and sell slaves to whites who shipped them downriver to be used as domestics in the larger towns and cities or as personal servants for the quineros, a practice which continued into the rubber era.[173]

Since whites either would not or could not provide food for themselves they resorted to kidnapping and force to get the natives to supply their needs.[174] This affected the division of labour of native groups as growing crops was a task of the women, growing food for the white traders would increase the women's workload or may even have forced men to do women's work. When told that steamships would be coming back into his home area carrying trade items that the Indians liked, an old Indian replied, "That is not good, my people will live better elsewhere, because we don't like steamships."[175] It is clear that what the old Indian really feared, no doubt like many other natives, was the

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[173] See Domínguez and Gómez, 60 and 74.

[174] It is unclear how many quineros entered the area and had some contact with native tribes. Domínguez and Gómez state that "the extraction, transport and commercialization of quinine gave rise to the entry of a large number of individuals to the Putumayo and Caquetá regions, and many of those who survived continued to be linked to the area as extractors, traders, or agents of rubber." La economía extractiva, 76. (...los trabajos de extracción, transporte y comercialización de las quinas habian propiciado el ingreso de un gran número de individuos a la región del Putumayo y Caquetá y muchos de los que sobrevivieron continuaron allí vinculados como extractores, comerciantes o empresarios caucheros.) The number of people in the area most likely increased with the rubber boom due to the higher price of that product and the influx of Peruvians, La Casa Arana, which brought in several hundred (at least 600) people into the area.

[175] De Quito, Relación de viaje, 19 as found in Domínguez and Gómez, 75. ("...asi ya no bueno; mio (sic) gente sea viviendo mejor otra parte; porque no gusta vapor.")

people who controlled the steamships and stole his people away, never to be seen again.[176]

The quinine industry died a fairly quick death in the early 1880s but already a new product was being extracted from the Amazonian jungles that would bring the often oppresive nature of Amazonian native labour systems to new heights. It is to the relatively well documented system and its consequences, and a broader discussion of why force was used against natives to get them to work for white traders, that we now turn our attention.

"We obtained nothing but misfortune and losses of capital from the rubber areas we discovered; this is the fate of the conquistador."[177] These words of Rafael Reyes concerning the rubber interests the Reyes company obtained and lost are instructive of the mindset of the rubber traders of the late 19th and early 20th century in the Upper Amazon basin. These people saw themselves as "conquistadors", going out into the untamed jungle to bring civilization, order and progress, not only to the land but also to its denizens, while trying to make a tidy profit in the process.[178] The Reyes failed and withdrew from the area, but many stayed to conquer the green jungle and its people.

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[176] Ibid., 75.

[177] Rafael Reyes, Memorias, 1850-1885, 177, as found in Domínguez and Gómez, 76. ("De las caucherías descubiertas por nosotros no obtuvimos sino desgracias y pérdidas capital; esta es la suerte de los conquistadores.")

[178] Marco Palacios, in his Coffee in Colombia, 1850-1970, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) states that during the latter half of the 19th century: "No word was used as often or as emphatically as 'civilization', that century's synonym for 'economic development'." 2.

The first in the Putumayo region were Colombians left over from the quinine trade, they merely switched products. For our purposes it is revealing to examine one of the first exploiters of rubber in the Putumayo area, the so called "conqueror of the Huitotos", Crisóstomo Hernández. Hernández was a black Colombian who entered the Putumayo area around 1896, fleeing the law after killing a man while drinking near Florencia in the upper Caquetá area.[179] Over the next few years he effectively "conquered" many Indians with the help of other hired Colombians in the Caraparaná and Igaraparaná region, the same region the Peruvian Amazon Company would take over within a decade. Joaquín Rocha, a Colombian travelling in the area around the turn of the century wrote the following concerning the way Hernández dealt with the Indians:

> Hernández...attacked some Huitoto tribes, easily conquering them because they were exclusively farmers and therefore, attached to their land. Those who refused to work for him, opted for the alternative of war, which seemed to be the motto of this conquistador, "work and peace, or war forever."[180]

Rocha describes how Hernández and his Colombian associates, after many encounters and battles, are finally triumphant "after a Titanic battle, the skill of the civilized man winning over the stupid fighting spirit of the barbarians."[181]

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[179] See Joaquín Rocha, Memorandum de Viaje, (Bogotá: Casa Editorial de 'El Mercurio', 1905), 105; and Domínguez and Gómez, 203-204.

[180] Rocha, Memorandum de Viaje, 105. (Hernández...entre algunas tribus de huitotos, faciles de conquistar por ser exclusivament agricultoras y por tanto apegadas a su suelo. Las que se negaron a trabajar con el, optaron por la alternativa de la guerra pues parecia ser el lema de este conquistador, "trabajo y paz o guerra siempre.")

[181] Rocha, Memorandum de Viaje, 106. (...despues de titánica lucha, la pericia de los hombres civilizados sobre el estúpido coraje de los

Hernández and other caucheros in the area used the time proven method of capturing and conquering Indians that goes all the way back to the missionaries of the 17th and 18th century. They would surround a communal house or maloca of an "unconquered" group of Indians, close off all entrances and enter the building. Since the caucheros and their hired help were armed and often surprised the Indians at night, the Indians had little choice but to supply the traders with food and rubber and accept the usual trade items in exchange.[182] But, as Rocha points out, trade items were not always sufficient to maintain a profitable trade relation with these Indian groups:

> But it is not very frequently that the savages, being lazy and people of minimal needs, yield to the art of persuasion and agree to work for the whites and live in continual trade with them...on many occasions the tribes...go and establish residence in unknown and far off places. So, then, if some way presents itself to surprise them with cunning and strategems, in order to take hold of their homes and, in the first days, take the women and children hostage, this is the method an astute conquistador will use.[183]

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bárbaros.) Rocha explicitly compares the actions of Hernández with the conquistadors of Mexico and Peru, both of whom were nearly defeated by the Indians at the palace of Montezuma and at Cuzco respectively, but who finally defeated and conquered the Indians. 105.

[182] See Rocha, Memorandum de Viaje, 102-104. Hernández's hired help are referred to by Rocha as peones, it is unclear if these were white or mestizo peons or Indians who had adopted "white" culture to the point of gaining the whites' trust to handle firearms. At times, it seems that the natives would vacate their homes and chacras with the approach of whitemen into the area. This was the case with F.W. Up de Graff and a companion who traveled through the Upper Napo river area. For three or four months in 1897 they lived off the food of chacras abandoned by Indians as they moved through the valley collecting caucho. While it is difficult to give the exact motives of the Indians, be it fear of the whitemen or his diseases, it is clear they wanted little to do with them. F.W. Up de Graff, Head Hunters of the Amazon: Seven Years of Exploration and Adventure, (New York: Duffield and Company, 1923), 98.

[183] Rocha, Memorandum de Viaje, 102-103. (Pero no es lo mas frecuente que los salvajes, perezosos de suyo y gentes de mínimas necesidades, se rindan a las artes de la persuación (sic) y convengan en

It is clear that often "persuasion" was not enough, and the caucheros quickly realized that more drastic action was necessary to get the Indians to work rubber for them. Hernández is also described by Rocha as having committed atrocities (such as cutting off heads of Indians, even suckling babies), which sounds like Arana's employees learned from his tactics.[184]

Other Colombians were also involved in the caucho trade in the Putumayo area at the turn of the century. Men like José Gregorio Calderón, who sold out to Arana, and Benjamín Larraniaga, who became an associate of Arana's, were involved in setting up rubber collecting and trading outfits. While the degree of coercion and violence used against native groups undoubtedly varied, the process resorted to was similar throughout the area. The caucheros needed the Indians, both to provide the caucheros with food but more importantly labour. At first, the caucheros provided goods that the Indians desired and could use within their own cultural setting, such as metal tools to help in slash and burn

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trabajar para los blancos y vivir en continuo trato con ellos. El solo hecho de probar a persuadirlos basta en muchas ocasiones para que la tribu se auyente y vaya a fijar su residencia a ignotos y lejanos lugares. Asi, pués, si antes se presenta alguna manera de sorprenderlos con artificios y estratagemas, para apoderarse de sus habitaciones y tener en los primeros días a sus mujeres e hijos (los de los indios) como en rehenes, de seguro sera ese el medio empleado por el astuto conquistador.)

184 Rocha, Memorandum de Viaje, 107. Several Barbadians testified that muchachos, or "civilized" Indians that were in the employ of the Arana Co., were often told to cut the heads off of runaway or uncooperative Indians. It is interesting that the muchachos were usually from a different tribe than the one of the majority of Indians in an area (ex. most were Bora Indians while the majority of Indians forced to collect rubber were Huitoto). This would help maintain inter-tribal animosity and the method of punishment was such that the different Indian groups could relate, heads often being the trophy in inter-tribal warfare. See Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 81.

agriculture.[185] Tribes that had little or no previous contact with whitemen were lured into a relationship they may not have understood. As Jorge Villegas and Fernando Botero state:

> They were accustomed to trade with neighbouring tribes; before the "gifts" of the whites, they would offer agricultural products; but the whites were not interested in bananas and yucca (at least not as a final product) but in the submission of the Indian in exchange for trinkets that were easily obtained outside the region.[186]

While trade between native groups was often conceived as mutual "gift giving" in the spirit of reciprocity and alliance building, each group receiving something not available or produced in their area, this was not the basis of the exchange relationship sought by the white rubber traders.[187] "Whites" sought to get the most rubber for the least possible

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185 Other trade items such as beads, mirrors and other trinkets were often accepted happily by Indians not because they were simple and easily pleased as many racist commentaries like to imply but rather because these items were seen as valuable within their culture. Beads, for example, were used to make necklaces which served as protection against evil influences. This, obviously, would be of great value within that particular cultural milieu, something too often lost to the undiscerning "white" eye.

186 Jorge Villegas and Fernando Botero, "Putumayo: indígenas, caucho y sangre", Cuadernos Colombianos, 12, Tomo III, Mar., 1979, 538. (Este acostumbre al trueque con las tribus vecinas, ante los "regalos" de los blancos ofrecía sus productos agrícolas; pero al blanco no le interesaban (al menos como fin principal) el plátano y la yuca sino el sometimiento del indígena a través de baratijas de fácil adquisición fuera de la región.)

187 Thomas P. Myers, "Aboriginal Trade Networks in Amazonia," in Peter D. Francis et al., eds., Networks of the Past: Regional Interaction in Archaeology, Proceedings of 12th Annual Conference, (The Archaeological Association of the University of Calgary, 1981) Myers concludes: "Ethnographic evidence suggests that these (native trade) goods, and others, were circulated in the interior both by gift and trade. This interior trade was spurred in part by the unequal distribution of scarce resources, in part by the maintenance of an alliance system which was constantly reaffirmed by gifts, and in part by internal specialization by personal preference." 25. It must be remembered, however, that Myers is talking mainly about pre-Columbian sedentary horticulturists. With the drop in population of native groups in the Amazon, these trade ties

expense.[188] The goods traded for rubber, even when they were useful to the Indians, were used as mediums of coercion and submission as the "gifts" were offered in advance for which the Indians had to pay by bringing in caucho.

> Those Indians were becoming civilized since the Calderóns, Larraniagas and others invaded those areas..., buying caucho from the natives in barter for European articles,...and this is what "civilization" consisted: becoming subjected to the whitemen and being obligated to work for him...[189]

This type of "civilization" was in many instances not accepted by the native groups. Flight into the forest was perceived as a constant problem for the early Colombian caucheros in the area, as it had been for the earlier missionaries and would be for the Peruvian Amazon Company. These flights were surely stressful for the native groups as well, as chacras and malocas had to be abandoned and new locations had to be found. This could also create tensions between groups as one group might infringe upon another's territory. Discontent became so great at

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probably were disrupted and what trade semi-nomadic or semi-sedendary groups, like those of the Putumayo, did is more difficult to ascertain. Myers states: "There is no compelling reason for Amazonian peoples to trade so long as the people remain nomadic." 24.

[188] Many sources indicate the "get rich quick and leave" mentality of the caucheros, be they Colombian or Peruvian. For Example Casement states: "Those who came in search of rubber had no intention of dwelling longer in the forest than the accumulation of the wealth they hoped to amass necessitated. They wanted to get rich quickly, not to stay and civilise the Indians or make their homes among them. The rubber trees of themselves were of no value; it was Indians who could be made or induced to tap them and to bring in the rubber on the white man's terms that all the invading 'conquistadores' were in search of." Clearly Casement's idea of "civilising" the Indian was a bit different from that used by the whites in the area. Putumayo Blue Book, 27.

[189] Villegas and Botero, "Putumayo", 538-539. (Aquellos indios vienen civilizandose desde que los Calderón, Larranaga (sic) y otros invadieron aquellas zonas..., comprándole a sus moradores el caucho a trueque de artículos europeos,.... En esto consistía la "civilización": en quedar sometidos al blanco y obligados a trabajar para el...)

times that "at the end of 1903 and the beginning of 1904 there was an almost general rebellion of the tribes (in this region) that traded with the Colombians...."[190] While discrepancies do appear in the sources as to how well Indians were treated it is quite clear that most, if not all, rubber companies had difficulty maintaining smooth trade relations with their native workers and often resorted to some type of coercion, be it threats, holding hostages, intimidation or outright physical abuse.[191]

While the exact system of exchange, that is, labour in the form of rubber gathering and food production for trade goods, may have varied in its details from place to place, its basic features remained similar throughout the Putumayo and Caquetá regions. Nor were these features - the initial exchange of useful goods to lure Indians into a relationship with rubber merchants who then extorted and coerced these native groups to collect caucho for them - typical of only these areas. There is ample mention of abuse of native workers during the rubber era throughout the Amazon region, particularly the more remote areas where often the only law was that of the .44 Winchester.

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190 Padre Fray Gaspar de Pinell, Excursión Apostólica por los Ríos Putumayo, San Miguel de Sucumbos, Cuyabeno, Caquetá, y Caguan, (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1928), 216.

191 Rocha, has little good to say about the early Colombian rubber merchants and their relations with the Indians, although it does seem that relations did vary somewhat from place to place. Memorandum de viaje, 102-107. Sources like Hardenburg see the Colombians as being better than the Peruvians,which is hardly surprising since he worked for a Colombian company and was mistreated by Peruvians working for la Casa Arana. Hardenburg does indicate some incredulity, however, when told by a Colombian that they treated the Indians well. He took the information "with a grain of salt, for it seemed to me very improbable." Hardenburg, The Putumayo, 146. While Domínguez and Gómez seem to try to exonerate the early Colombian merchants their main source is a Colombian mestizo who was born twenty years after the first Colombians entered the area to collect rubber. La economía extractiva, 201-226.

John Hemming mentions many of these regions. In the late 1860s, a mulatto boatman named Manoel Quirino Paes controlled long stretches of the Tapajos River in Brazil, treating "his" Indians as virtual slaves. Holding Indians by force in their houses or holding women hostage so their men would return with rubber was common along the Tocantins River. Battles between whites and Indians were also common in isolated parts of Amazonia, in the forests between the lower Xingu and Tocantins for example. In the far west of Brazil, some of the worst fighting occurred on the upper Jurua river, particularly in the later years of the boom.[192] In 1882, up the Purus River, Leonel Antonio do Sacramento was charged and punished by the state government for the destruction of more than five villages and the murder of over two hundred men, women and children. His arrest was a rarity, however, as traveler James Wells in 1886 pointed out: "There are scores of similar, or even worse, crimes that happen and pass away unheard of."[193] In other areas of Peru, Bolivia, Brazil and Colombia similar crimes against Indians were widespread.[194]

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[192] For the previous discussion of other areas of exploitation of Indians by whites see Hemming, Amazon Frontier, 288-304.

[193] James W. Wells, Exploring and Travelling Three Thousand Miles through Brazil, from Rio de Janiero to Maranhao, 2 Vols., (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1886), Vol. 2, 225. Wells's comments refer to an official report of the Minister of Justice of Brazil for the year 1883.

[194] Hemming mentions many instances of abuse against Indian groups and also some of the battles the Indians waged in retaliation. For instance, he mentions "a massacre perpetrated by Peruvian caucheros ... on the Panoan-speaking Yumbanawa of the Tarauaca headwater of the Jutai." This enslaved group tried to escape after a few months and were shot as they tried to run from their hut to their canoes by some "civilized" Kashinawa who worked for the caucheros. "Apart from the young women, who were kept for the so-called civilised Indians, only one man managed to escape." The same source, Father C. Tastevin, mentions a massacre of another Indian group, the Nehanawa, by a group of Peruvians who ambushed their hut; and "on the Liberdade headwater of

the Jurua, Tastevin found that most tribal Indians had been exterminated in pitiless raids." See pages 304-305. Hemming also talks about another remote area that "suffered acutely by being on the borders of Brazil and Peru, exploited by rubber and latex tappers from both countries and far beyond the reach of any legal authorities of either nation. The reports are full of terrible episodes of cruelty to Indians. We must assume that these represent a fraction of similar skirmishes that went unrecorded during the previous decades of the rubber boom." In a 1911 Brazilian report an inspector on the Inauini headwater of the Purus, "found a camp of Peruvian caucheros with sixty Yamamadi in their forced employ. These were surrounded by a ring of armed guards. 'They had been captured in their maloca, many leagues from there, and had been taken to the latex forest with every sort of violence. This included hunger, for they received no food whatever during the entire journey. Some died during the march, others when they reached the camp.'" Hemming, 305-306. Other examples of exploitation and violence upon natives by rubber gatherers of all the Amazonian nations are given by Hemming, Amazon Frontier, 306-308. Hemming is not the only writer to talk of abuses in other areas of Amazonia. Travelers, such as Joseph F. Woodroffe in his The Upper Reaches of the Amazon, (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd.,1914), speaks of similar violent treatment of peons and natives alike in Peru, Bolivia, and parts of Colombia and Ecuador. He states that "it is an unwritten law that the Indian is an animal or a chattel, and as such has no rights. This is largely the case in cities and towns, while in the bush the Indian's life is hopeless." 227. He does not limit his survey to natives who work only rubber, rather: "Rubber cutter, labourers on farms, sugar plantations, distilleries, boatmen, and domestics, are cruelly whipped, and even done to death, for trivial misdemeanours. They sleep almost invariably under lock and key, while their liberty is restricted and their food absolutely insufficient. Their children are also the property of their masters." 231. He also "repeatedly met caucheros who have bewailed the fact that they were short of goods to give their men; not in the Indians' interest, but because they were afraid that the Indians, if they did not buy anything, would soon think themselves out of debt, in which case the caucheros would be obliged to shoot some of them so as to save further trouble. Hundreds of Indians lose their lives in this manner." About correrías or Indian hunts, in which whole villages are decimated, Woodroffe says that they are, "as most travellers to the Spanish-American Republics know, a very common occurrence." See pages 235-236. The well known writer and long time resident of Peru, C. Reginald Enock had this to say in his 1910 book Peru, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1910): "Continual raids are made by the white rubber-gatherers upon the forest Indian tribes to obtain workers and women, and there is, as ever, a good deal of iniquity attending the production of india-rubber on the Amazon, in the territories belonging to Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru - vast territories which it is impossible yet to efficiently police." 237.

What then happened in the Putumayo region in the first decade of the twentieth century that would elicit so much foreign attention and would earn it the infamous moniker, "Devil's Paradise"? Was it unique or was it simply the most publicized and therefore the most well known example of exploitation of indigenous peoples during the rubber boom? The answer is, of course, a little of both. The atrocities committed by the Peruvian Amazon Company were, by far, the most publicized and are the most documented within the Amazon basin during the rubber era. The reasons for this are many and varied which in some ways makes the situation on the Putumayo somewhat unique; but in many ways, and I am arguing in the most important ways, the incidents in this isolated area were common for the region, and in addition, continued processes of interaction between "whites" and Indians that had been occurring since the 16th century.

The Peruvian Amazon Company entered the Putumayo area as the Arana Bros. Co. (Arana Hermanos) in 1896 as traders who bought the caucho rubber collected by Colombian rubber gatherers (i.e. from people like Crisóstomo Hernández and Larraniaga who had natives collect rubber for them) in exchange for different trade goods.[195] During the next few years the Casa Arana, as the Arana company was known, which was made up of several subsidiary companies, consolidated its holdings in the Putumayo region. By buying the debts of several of the Colombian traders, merging with others like Larraniaga, and finally, squeezing

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195 Roger Casement, in The Putumayo Blue Book, has this to say about the first rubber gatherers in the Putumayo: "The foundations thus laid by Crisóstomo Hernández, and Larranaga (sic) in 1886 grew not without bloodshed and many killings of the Indians, into a widespread series of Colombian settlements along the Banks of the Caraparaná and Igaraparaná...." 28.

others out by having them arrested by Peruvian authorities who worked in their interests, the Casa Arana became the largest rubber company in the area.[196] These traders either sold out to the Aranas or spent time in jail in Iquitos. As a last resort, in 1908, Aranas' company in conjunction with Peruvian government troops, attacked and killed several Colombians who were not cooperating with their bid to rule the Putumayo.[197] Even before this date, by the end of 1905, Arana had successfully acquired almost 12,000 square miles of Putumayo territory.[198]

Although no sources give a detailed description of the system of rubber extraction utilized by the Colombians, the method of extraction set up by Arana's company has been well documented.[199] The two main company houses and collection areas were called La Chorrera and El Encanto, both previously set up by Colombians and located on the Igaraparaná and Caraparaná Rivers respectively. Most of the rubber gathering, however, took place at smaller posts or sections and were run

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196 Villegas and Botero, "Putumayo", they mention that the Aranas would arrest Colombian rubber gatherers with the support of the authorities of Peru and bring them to the "oficina de la Casa Arana" (the office of the Arana Co.) which was the jail in Iquitos and force them to sell their lands or stay in jail. 547.

197 See Villegas and Botero, 546-548. See also Select Committee Report, 9. Richard Collier, in The River That God Forgot: The Story of the Amazon Rubber Boom, (London: Collins, 1968), names four Colombians who by 1905 still refused to sell out to Arana. They were David Serrano, Hipólito Pérez, Gabriel Martinez and his partner Antonio Ordóñez. 63.

198 Collier, The River that God Forgot, 61.

199 Dr. Romulo Paredes, in his confidential report on the situation in the Putumayo region and his adminstrative recommendations for the area, has this to say: "I do not know the exact manner adopted by the Colombians in paying for the rubber which they received from the Indians, but I am certain that they employed a method similar to that which I have pointed out, with very slight variations." While Paredes was Peruvian his report does condemn the atrocities and the above statement seems reasonable. From Slavery in Peru, letter from H. Clay Howard to the Secretary of State, April 3, 1912, page 156.

by section chiefs, most of whom were Peruvian or Colombian. The chiefs were helped by five or six "rational" employees, meaning white, black or mestizo "civilized" people, and several muchachos.[200] Muchachos "were generally young Indians taken from one tribe and used in acts of terrorisation in another district over people who were not their immediate kinsmen."[201] Most of captured Indians were Huitoto and many had been "conquered" by the Colombians who had preceded Arana's company. These were made to collect rubber for the company and every 15 or 20 days the muchachos, often Bora, would be sent out to collect the Indians who would bring in their rubber to the section house. "If at these 'puestas' the quantity brought by an individual was insufficient, he (or she, as the case might be) was flogged or otherwise punished in order

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[200] Casement, in his description of the setting up of rubber establishments by Colombians has this to say: "Generally, a leading man fitted out an expedition with a few companions, partners in effort and initial expenditure, and with a gang of hired 'peons,' or, as they are called in that region, 'racionales' (half-breeds mostly who can read and write to distinguish them from the 'Indios,' who are ignorant of all save forest lore), he journeyed to some part of the forest in search of tribes of wild Indians -'infieles' or 'infidels' - who could be easily subdued and reduced to work the wild rubber trees in the territory they inhabited." Putumayo Blue Book, 27.

[201] Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 31. The muchachos display certain similarities with the interpreters and fiscales of the missionary era of the 17th and 18th centuries. "Some 'muchachos' would grow into the service from being first 'cholitos,' or small Indian boys, possibly orphans, growing up around the white man's station and trained to do his bidding." They lived in a special house built by the "compulsory labour of the neighbouring forest Indians." "To be a 'muchacho' was a species of promotion, of selection on approval; and as it quickly entailed the possession of a rifle and cartridges with which to terrorise the rubber-gathering Indians, it followed that the 'muchacho' was able to indulge his own predatory instincts at the expense of his unarmed and defenceless countrymen...." It is clear that the muchachos added to tensions between Indians and probably, like the fiscales of the missionary era, were often not wholly accepted by either whites or Indians. See Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 31.

to stimulate him to greater exertion before next 'puesta'."[202] After four or five puestas the whole rubber-working population of the section - men, women and children - would carry the fabrico or the total amount of rubber collected to La Chorrera or the nearest point on the River Igaraparaná. "They got no food for the long march to La Chorrera, and no food during the lengthy periods of collecting, tapping, and washing the rubber between each 'puesta'."[203] They had to supply food from their own chacras, which was very difficult since they were very busy collecting rubber. Fallen tree stumps, mud and water and deep hollows impeded their advance on the trails with their heavy loads, but the lash and Winchester "helped" them complete their journey.

Payment, when such was made, was at the end of each fabrico and was thought of as an "advance" towards the next fabrico's rubber collection. In this way, the prevalent labour system of the Amazon, debt peonage, was maintained. The chief in each section put his own value on the rubber collected by the Indians and paid them according to his own arbitrary scale. At Matanzas, one of the section centers, 75 kilos was required to obtain an escopeta or trade gun and an additional 20 kilos was necessary for the powder, shot and caps. The same gear could be had at Atenas, another center, for "only" 50 or 60 kilos.[204] Roger

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202 Casement, The Putumayo Blue Book, 49.

203 Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 49.

204 It seems odd that the rubber merchants would trade "guns" to the Indians at all. This is somewhat less surprising when one realizes these "escopetas" or trade guns, usually of poor quality, were single shot muzzle loaders, requiring shot and caps, while all the rubber workers were armed with easily loaded Winchesters. Casement comments on the use of guns by Indians: "The civilising white men were always, I found, particularly anxious that arms of precision should not fall into the hands of the wild Indians, and if by theft or otherwise Indians became possessed of them continual raids were made until the possessors were caught and the captured arms recovered. The only Indians who were

Casement generally found that the type of merchandise used by the Arana company was "the most inferior kind of trade goods, and cannot compare with the articles supplied in any part of tropical Africa I have been in."[205] Everything depended on the chief of the section and generally, according to Casement, "the Indian took his advance and made off - glad to escape."[206] It certainly seems that there was no systematic treatment of debt toward the Indians. They collected rubber and received negligible compensation for their work though they were expected to keep on collecting rubber to pay off their "debt." The American Consul in Iquitos, Stuart J. Fuller, when commenting on the problems in the Putumayo in 1912, stated it well when he said: "The only difference between the Putumayo and the other rivers in this respect (i.e. debt peonage) seems to be that in the former less attention was paid to the formality of the debts."[207]

The whole concept of debt is an interesting one in this context. Clearly, if the idea of debt had any "real" meaning, that is the "whiteman's" meaning, for the Indians the level of force and violence

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permitted the use of rifles were those young men... who were being trained to oppress their countrymen in the interests of the 'caucheros.' (muchachos)" Putumayo Blue Book, 31. As well, one of Barbadians, James Lane, gave the following information to Casement: "A man would never get a trade gun for a 'fabrico,' he would have to work a very long time - certainly for a year to get a gun. He has never seen an Indian get a gun for even 2 'fabricos' of rubber. It would have to be over 2 'fabricos' - of that he is certain. He thinks 3 'fabricos,' i.e. eighteen months or some 200 kilog. of rubber for a trade gun." Putumayo Blue Book, 94. Clearly guns were difficult for the Indians to obtain and when and if they did acquire one it made little difference against a group of muchachos, Black overseers and whites, all better armed.

205 Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 50.

206 Ibid.

207 "Consul Fuller to the Secretary of State", July 1, 1912, in Slavery in Peru, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), 62nd Congress, 3rd Session, Doc. no. 1366, Vol. 3, 15.

needed to keep them collecting rubber would seem superfluous. It is likely, therefore, that being used to systems of exchange based on reciprocity and gift-giving, the idea of receiving goods in advance for something with no meaningful equivalent value was not well understood. When these goods varied widely in their quality and abundance and "exchange rates" for goods varied considerably this probably added to the confusion of the whole process. That the concept of debt as a guarantee for future work was probably ill-understood by the natives because of its foreign nature was another possible reason they so often ran away once they had obtained the goods they found useful. While the exchange of trade goods for rubber may have been couched in terms of mutual gift-giving, trying to set up some kind of reciprocal trade relationship the concomitant and ever-present threat or use of force seems to indicate this type of relationship failed to materialize or at least was not understood by both parties. As well, the notion of reciprocity among Amazonian groups is often embedded in ideas of civil behaviour. The use of violence would abrogate any reciprocal obligations that may have been achieved. This inefficiency of "debt" to provide labour to fulfill the debt incurred - a debt, it must be remembered that was often initiated with a generous dose of force - helped create and perpetuate the other guarantor of debt repayment, force and terror.

Much force and violence was used to get the Indians to stay in these areas and collect rubber for the Peruvian Amazon Company. One might think that useful things such as guns, machetes, axes, etc. would be relatively easy to trade to the Indians and some sort of long term trade could be established, but this was not the case. Indians often did accept trade items eagerly at first, as in earlier times, but when these articles

were obtained the Indians were unwilling to maintain the type of relationship the whiteman wished to achieve.[208] What type of relationship with the Indians were the traders trying to achieve? Or, more importantly, what did the traders want from the Indians? Like the missionaries and other traders before them, the rubber traders of the Putumayo expressed a desire to "civilize" the Indians of the Amazonian jungles. The missionaries, as we have discussed, attempted to do this by inculcating ideas of Christianity and values that corresponded to their European background. Many of these values had to do with the conceptions of work and the exchange of goods. When dealing with the rubber traders it is clear that their idea of bringing civilization to the Indians was intricately linked to these ideas.

"To civilize" the Indians, moreover, first meant that the Indian had to be contacted and conquered. Rubber workers were often referred to as "conquistadors" by contemporaries, such as Joaquín Rocha calling Crisóstomo Hernández the "conquistador of the Huitotos."[209] While conquest of these Indians was often effected by the use of force, as had occurred for centuries, the meaning of "conquest" had some very specific connotations for these twentieth century conquistadors.

As pointed out by Henry Gielgud, the British accountant who went to the Putumayo to check out the books of the Aranas for the British directors, "...Conquistación is the regular term for recruiting labour, for

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208 Alexander Marchant in his study, From Barter to Slavery: The Economic Relations of Portuguese and Indians in the Settlement of Brazil, 1500-1580, (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1966) makes a similar conclusion about the trade relation developed between Indians and Portuguese four centuries before the rubber era: "If the Indians were sated with Portuguese things, their interest in barter was no doubt slight...." 101.

209 Joaquín Rocha, Memorandum de Viaje, 66.

getting people to work for you. It is the regular term all over South America."[210] When pressed further about the term "gastos de conquistación" or "expenses of conquest" during the Select Committee hearings investigating the Putumayo atrocities, Gielgud defined this term as representing "further expenditure of a capital nature incurred in reducing the Indians in the several sections named to subjection." His interrogator Charles Roberts responded: "I put it to you that you knew this was no expenses incurred in recruiting labour, but expenses incurred in reducing the Indians to subjection by means of rifles." To which Gielgud replied: "I regarded it as expenses in connection with getting the Indians to work...it was captial spent in conquering or, properly attracting to the work the Indians."[211] Reducing the Indian to subjection and work, according to Gielgud, cost more in certain areas because of the warlike character of some of the Indians. The cost often included hundreds of guns which overseers used to go into the forests and make the Indians collect rubber. As Gielgud stated: "They were getting the Indians to work for them, undoubtedly: that is incidental to collecting rubber."[212] Casement gives his own explanation of the intentions of the whites, be they the Colombian rubber merchants or the Peruvian Amazon Company: "The object of the 'civilised' intruders, in the first instance, was not to annihilate the Indians, but to 'conquistar,' i.e.

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210 House of Commons Sessional Papers, "Report and Special Report from the Select Committee on Putumayo," 1913, Vol. 14, XXXVII. See also the evidence given by Henry Gielgud, Feb.4, 1913, page 378.

211 Sessional Papers, "Select Committee Report," Vol. 14, Feb. 4, 1913, 378. According to the books "Gastos de Conquestación" accounted for £11,420 for 18 months under an entry thay was headed "Rubber and Agricultural Estates, including Development Expenditure." 380.

212 Sessional Papers, "Select Committee Report," Vol. 14, Feb. 4, 1913, 382.

to subjugate them, and put them to what was termed civilised, or at any rate profitable, occupation to their subduers."[213]

The connection between conquering and civilizing the Indians and trying to make them work for whites was also made by Peruvian Naval Captain F. Enrique Espinar in a report to the "coronel prefecto" of the Department of Loreto. In his report of October 25, 1902, he states that the Casa Larraniaga, Arana and Company, "conquered five large tribes", and

> ...take great pains to force the infidels (Indians) to wear clothes and work the way people do in the highlands. To create needs, and accustom them to work and desire something, this is the problem to solve, then they will learn to work to be able to obtain what they crave.[214]

This was one of the biggest problems the caucheros, be they Peruvian or Colombian, had to face, how to get the Indians to work and desire things.[215] They often could not and this led to the use of force and terror.

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213 Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 10.

214 "Viaje al Igara-Paraná, afluente izquierdo del río Putumayo, por el capitán de navío don F. Enrique Espinar", Oct. 25, 1902, in Colección de Documentos Oficiales referentes á Loreto, Tomo 1, Formada de Orden Suprema por Carlos Larrabure y Correa, Jefe del Archivo Especial de Límites, (Lima: Imp. de "La Opinión Nacional", 1905), Gremios num. 129. Page 221. (...se esmera en obligar a los infieles a vestirse i la manera de trabajar en la montaña. Crearles necesidades, acostumbrarlos al trabajo i a que deseen algo, es el problema por resolver, pues de ello resultará el que aprendan a trabajar para poder obtener lo que apetezcan.)

215 Villegas and Botero, in "Putumayo, indígenas, caucho y sangre," state the following: "...it does not seem that one can conclude that the Colombian rubber gatherers behaved differently toward the Indians than the Peruvians. On the contrary, their policy was the same: to secure - generally through violence - forced labour from the Indians and to approriate all the proceeds of that labour." (...no parece que puede concluirse que los caucheros colombianos tuvieran un comportamiento frente a los indígenas diferente al de los peruanos. Por el contrario, su política fue idéntica: asegurar - generalmente a través de la violencia - el trabajo forzado de los indígenas y apropiarse del producto en su

The basis of the relationship between the white rubber traders and the Indian groups, therefore, was that of labour. The caucheros wanted to use the Indians' labour to get rich as quickly as possible. There was only one small problem: nobody asked the Indians if they wanted to work for the caucheros. They, quite clearly, did not. They demonstrated their antipathy toward the work regimen of the caucheros in many ways. One of the most common means of resistance and protest, one that the Indians had been using for centuries, was flight. Groups would simply run away during the night and try to disappear into the forest. This, however, was a risky enterprise as the punishment for fleeing was severe.

> Indians were flogged not only for shortage in rubber, but still more greviously if they dared to run away from their houses, and by flight to a distant region, to escape altogether from the tasks laid upon them. Such flight as this was counted a capital offence, and the fugitives, if captured, were as often tortured and put to death as brutally flogged. Expeditions were fitted out and carefully planned to track down and recover the fugitives, however far the flight might have been.[216]

But the Indians fled constantly and just as the missionaries were always sending out parties to track down and capture runaway Indians, correrías or commissions were a constant part of the rubber companies' work.[217]

During the interrogation of the Barbadian employees of the Peruvian Amazon Company by Roger Casement, descriptions such as these by Preston Johnson were common: "The Indians, he declares, were

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totalidad.) 563. I think this is a very sound observation by the two Colombian scholars.

216 Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 35

217 Preston Johnson, one of the Barbadians interviewed by Roger Casement defines "correrías" as "runnings or chasings after Indians, and commissions with the same end in view, always to get the Indians to work rubber." See Putumayo Blue Book, 110.

killed for not working rubber - for running away in order to escape from work. Some may like to work rubber, but others do not, and these latter are not asked if they like to work rubber, but are chased and killed."[218] Another Barbadian, Augustus Walcott described some of the occurrences during an eight month stay in 1909 at Ultimo Retiro under the section chief Alfredo Montt:

> During this period of eight months he saw three Indians - two men, prisoners, and one woman, also a prisoner - who were killed. They were shot by Montt's orders. They had not been willing to work "caucho." He said they were giving bad advice to the others telling them not to work. They were put in the "cepo" (stocks) and he then had them shot.[219]

Clearly, not working for the caucheros had very serious consequences, but still many Indians chose not to and the others had to be forced by employees that were hired to watch them and ensure they collected rubber.[220] And why was it so hard to get Indians to work rubber?

At least part of the answer lies in the type of culture the Indians possessed and how it differed in fundamental ways from the ideas being introduced by the rubber companies. It is evident that on initial contact, Indian groups were willing and anxious to obtain certain trade goods that the whites offered, especially metal tools, guns and beads. It is also clear that when these were obtained there was little incentive for the Indians to obtain more of these goods. Theirs was a society based on slash and burn agriculture and hunting and gathering; a semi-mobile society, a society that was intimately connected to and affected by its environment.

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218 Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 110.

219 Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 115.

220 Henry Gielgud in his testimony stated that the well armed employees were "in the habit of going about a lot in the forest...collecting Indians...(and) supervising their work." See Sessional Papers, "Select Committee Report," 1913, Vol. 14, 181.

People owned very few items as most tools were made of corruptible products such as wood and plant fibers, because stone was a relatively rare commodity. Items such as stone axes were used, and much of the labour in the community was done, communally. Men often worked together to clear chacras or to go fishing and hunting, their main activities. Women often went to their gardens together, harvesting and gathering produce in groups.

What trade occurred between tribes was for items that each group specialized in, usually determined by their specific environment. When people died they were usually buried or burned with their own private possessions, such as a man's hunting gear or a women's gathering basket or cooking utensils. Material accumulation was neither a part of their culture nor did it fit their semi-sedentary lifestyle as movement is an essential part of slash and burn agriculture. According to Dr. Romulo Paredes's report on the conditions in the Putumayo, Aranas' employees:

> Ransacked the commercial establishments of the various ports in search of cheap merchandise, even though it were bad, the only thing required being that it should be cheap, for it was for the Indians, and therefore its bad condition made no difference, the result being that a veritable lot of refuse canned goods, cloth, and groceries, almost useless and unserviceable, were sent to that region.[221]

Not only were the goods bad but canned goods and cloth were also not culturally appropriate items of trade. Indigenous peoples in the area had many food taboos which had to do with their spiritual connection to many of the plants and animals of the area. Moreover, cloth and clothing were things that, while being symbols of civilization to Europeanized

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221 "Confidential Report" to the Prefect of the Department of Loreto made by Dr. Romulo Paredes, Judge of the First Instance Commissioned to investigate the crimes of the Putumayo, as found translated in Slavery in Peru, 154.

minds, were often seen as a nuisance to native peoples of the tropical forests. Little wonder, that the "Indians often refused to accept the goods."[222]

Working rubber infringed upon many of the traditional activities of the forest Indians of the Putumayo drainage. Not only was collecting rubber an introduced activity, it took away valuable and essential time from food procurement for these groups. Men could not hunt or fish as much and even women were forced to collect rubber rather than tend their chacras, which in tropical forests must be weeded and cared for vigilantly since other plants and insects can easily invade a garden.

In addition, the work forced upon the natives showed little or no respect for the division of labour along gender lines common in the tropical forests of the Amazon. Men cut the trees and burned the slash in preparation for the planting, weeding and harvesting which was carried out by the women. Most of the men's activity involved hunting and fishing. Not only were both men and women forced to collect rubber, but moreover, they

> have to work in the district, without any reward whatever. They also have to bring in fuel, fruits, game, etc., for the employees and their concubines, and look after the mules and other cattle where existent.[223]

They were forced to grow food for their "employers" and build their houses also. In some sections, the chiefs even went to the extreme of:

> ...prohibiting them to cultivate farms, for the time which they spent at agriculture was lost to the business. For this reason there were chiefs who desolated cultivated fields and burned houses in order that the Indians might not settle in particular spots and in order that they might acquire an

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222 "Confidential Report", Slavery in Peru, 155.

223 Joseph F. Woodroffe, The Upper Reaches of the Amazon, (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1914), 162.

> affection for certain places where they reaped their sustenance and where they might be solely occupied in wandering about the woods searching for the rich rubber trees which were the cause of so many crimes.[224]

Clearly, the type of labour demanded of the native did not blend in well with the labour regime his culture had determined. People were forced to do work that often either remunerated them little or nothing, or remunerated them with culturally inappropriate goods, which they often refused. The work they had to do also took them away from work that helped maintain their integrity as a community, that is, that helped maintain their social well-being. Food production, be it farming or hunting and fishing, often had a communal aspect to it, whether it be in the sharing of work or its spoils. If this was disrupted it affected the whole community.

A strong indication that the Aranas and other rubber gatherers before them disrupted the social fabric of native groups is the importance of the "chupe del tabaco". Often described as a ritual that lamented the Indians' loss of independence and affirmed their hatred of whites, this, in a way, is not too inaccurate. Hardenburg describes it as a ritual that took place during fiestas "to solemnise any agreement or contract"[225], while Eugenio Robuchon, the explorer who was hired by the Arana company but mysteriously disappeared in the forest at the turn of the century, describes it as a ceremony "in which the Indians recall their lost liberty and their actual sufferings, and formulate terrible vows of

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224 "Confidential Report", as found in Slavery in Peru, 146.

225 W.E. Hardenburg, The Putumayo: the Devil's Paradise, 155. It is unclear whether Hardenburg actually witnessed the ritual, since most of Hardenburg's book is based on second or third hand knowledge, it is doubtful.

vengeance against the whites."[226] While there may be aspects of truth in these observations, the "chupe del tobaco" most likely had other signification, more closely linked to the culture of the Huitoto.

If we examine more recent studies of the use of hallucinogenic drugs, including tobacco, within the culture of tropical forest peoples we see that the use of this drug was and is intimately linked with the view of the Indian world and their place within it. Often used in healing rituals, tobacco decoctions and other drugs were and are often used to try and diagnose an individual's or a community's ailment or social disease. While individual diagnoses often have a wider social context - for example, ritual healing often requires the shaman to find a source for the illness, often being the bad intentions of someone who has ensorcelled the patient - shamans are also looked upon to keep the community as a whole happy and healthy, which in the magico-religious paradigm of tropical jungle peoples, means maintaining good relations with the gods or supernatural world.[227] Since tropical peoples' conceptions of the

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226 Eugenio Robuchon, En el Putumayo y sus Afluentes, (Lima: Inprenta La Industria, 1907), 59, as translated in The Putumayo Blue Book, 48. For a discussion on the relation of the "chupe del tobaco" and the role of terror in the Putumayo, see Taussig, Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man, 109-119.

227 See Johannes Wilbert, "Tobacco and Shamanistic Ecstasy among the Warao Indians of Venezuela," in Flesh of the Gods: The Ritual Use of Hallucinogens, Peter T. Furst, ed., (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 58-61. Rafael Girard, in his Indíos selvaticos de la Amazonia peruana, (Mexico City: Libro Mex Editores, 1958) has a simplistic view of the use of tobacco, but recognizes the social nature of the drug when he comments that it played an important role in inter-tribal social relations. 61. For the healing use of natema or yage and tobacco water among the Jívaros of the upper Amazon area in Ecuador, see Michael J. Harner, The Jivaro: People of the Sacred Waterfalls, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 166. For a broader discussion of shamanism and tobacco use see Johannes Wilbert, Tobacco and Shamanism in South America, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), especially 171-202. Marlene Dobkin de Ríos in her Hallucinogens: Cross-Cultural Perspectives,

supernatural were and are intrinsically linked to the natural world, due to a more intimate relationship with it, disruptions of their relationships with the natural world, such as their means of food production (i.e. agriculture and hunting and gathering) have an analogous effect on their supernatural relations that in turn have an effect on the whole community. The "chupe del tobaco" was no doubt, in part, a ritual that sought to diagnose and even cure the individual and social body of the ills it was enduring at the hands of the rubber merchants. Be they the diseases that were brought into the region by the whitemen, or just the oppressive labour system they imposed, these were social ills that dislocated whole peoples from their world and their place within it.

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984) talks about a range of hallucinogenic substances including tobacco which enable shamans to enter "into the realm of tenuous, uneasy interpersonal relations and act(ing) as a means to restore equilibrium in difficult situations." 189. In a situation like that in the Putumayo where a whole village or people were in a "difficult situation" the role of the shaman to try to rebalance the "world" was very difficult if not impossible. The results were probably devastating, physically and psychologically.

CONCLUSION

The atrocities committed in the Putumayo have been the subject of much writing and study since their occurrence at the turn of the century. They have often been seen as somehow special or unique in the context of the rubber boom because of their relatively well-documented nature. It is clear, however, that the use of force and terror against the Indians of the Amazon was not limited to the Putumayo River. Nor, in fact, was it limited to the rubber era but was prevalent from the very earliest contact between whites and Indians. The early explorers often fought with the Indians as they stole food from them. The missionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries tried to establish more permanent relations with the Indians as they worked to instill Christian and European values. The use of force was thought to be a necessary part of this process of cultural indoctrination and domination but proved a failure. With the advent of extractive industries, especially quinine and rubber, the use of force and terror against the Indians escalated. An explanation of the reasons behind the violence used against the Indians is of major interest for this study.

Despite the contacts made with different Indian groups in the Putumayo before the rubber era, these Indians were living according to their own ideas of "civilization" or their own view of the world. That world view that was both a product of and affected their culture and environment. In an environment where certain activities - such as food procurement and village movement - were be done on a daily or regular basis the accumulation of material goods was not practical. More importantly, material goods were not seen as simply inanimate things to

accumulate or acquire prestige, but rather they had deeper signification that helped link one to one's cosmos. The material world was seen as connected or enmeshed with the spiritual or other world.

David Guss, in his study of the Yekuana of the upper Orinoco, explains how

> the material demands of survival are but an integument for the far greater spiritual challenge underlying each encounter between the village and the world that lies beyond. In a universe where every object - animal, mineral, and vegetable - is animated with an independent and potentially destructive life-force (akato), the problem of appropriation becomes less a practical than a spiritual one.[228]

To the Yekuana every object they make (particularly their houses and baskets) and every activity they perform (particularly those concerning food procurement and production) are imbued with ritual action that speaks to the spirits that all things possess. Knowing the proper "language" or rituals enables one to successfully live in a world full of spirits that can be evil and damaging. If things are done "properly" one can live in peace with one's world and one's neighbours. As Guss states: "...in tribal economies 'domestic contentment' and 'livelihood' are valued more highly than the maximization of production...."[229] This is quite foreign to western ideas of economy, production and surplus value, ideas held by "whites" involved in rubber extraction.

The use of magic herbs and body paints and the different chants of the Yekuana all help to make one truly "human", that is one that is in tune with the dual nature of reality.[230] A reality which is based on the

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228 David M. Guss, To Weave and Sing, 30-31.

229 Guss, To Weave and Sing, 28.

230 Guss makes some interesting observations about the importance of body paints for the Yekuana: "Without the symbolic coverage these pigments provide, an object, animate or inanimate, is simply not considered human. Analogous to the Western distinction

"seen" or material world and the powerful and potentially dangerous "unseen" or spiritual world, which manifests itself in the "seen" world through different animals and plants.

> Recognizing the existence of an invisible, independent force behind every object, the Yekuana accompany each material activity with a series of ritual ones designed to disarm it. It is not enough, for example, to simply cut down a tree and carve a canoe. One must also communicate with the supernatural power that controls the tree, negotiating its transfer of ownership. If this is not done, not only will the artifact be flawed but the spirit accompanying it will be hostile and vengeful, leading to disease and possible death. Ritual tools are therefore as essential as physical ones for the accomplishment of any task. Without their capacity to influence the invisible, there can be no transformation of the objects of nature into those of culture.[231]

While each Indian culture has its own unique aspects, the ideas expressed above are useful to express the kind of culture developed by other groups in a similar environment, such as the Indians of the Putumayo.

The Huitoto also conceived of the world as an interconnecting duality of the physical and the spiritual, mediated through ritual. As Veronica de Osa states concerning the Huitoto: "The existence of rituals...is the form or the means by which this society establishes its mechanism of balance as a human nucleus, while at the same time it consolidates itself as a society in a specific medium which serves as a

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between 'clothed' and 'naked' it is body paint, more than any other single object, which for the Tekuana distinguishes the civilized from the wild." To Weave and Sing, 63. The Huitotos also used body paints often applied in various symbolic patterns that, like the Yekuana, probably made them "human" or offered them protection from the spirits with whom one had to live and interact. It is ironic that the very fact that the Indians wore nothing except these paints revealed their "barbarity" to the "whites" when, in fact, they were symbols of "civilization" to the Indians. This is another example of how two cultures viewed the world in very different terms.

231 Guss, To Weave and Sing, 61.

habitat."[232] Through shaman directed rituals they tried to maintain an order, a balance in their conception of the universe which imbued their culture with meaning: a culture with which intruders from another "world" collided.

The various sources, as discussed in the first chapter, offer many reasons why the Putumayo became the "Devil's Paradise." While the racist comments by some American and British writers about the nature of the Iberian character in the tropics hold little explanatory value, some of the economic reasons espoused by different writers indicate a more logical explanation. The fact that the type of rubber most exploited in the area, caucho, came from the Castilloa elasticus tree which was destroyed during the tapping process was not conducive to establishing long term productive relations with the Indians but rather short term productive relations based on the use of force. This is, however, of limited explanatory worth as force was used in many other areas where the longer lasting Hevea genus of rubber tree grew.

Of more importance was the general attitude of many, if not all rubber merchants, of going into an area, extracting as much as one could in the least possible time, taking one's profits and moving to the nearest outpost of "civilization." This "get rich quick" mentality, which harkens back to the "El Dorado" mentality of the early Spanish conquistadors, certainly did nothing to foster peaceful relations with the native groups in the area. Due to the high price of wage labour in the Loreto area and the abundance of natives in the Putumayo, the time honoured system of trying to induce the Indians to be "reduced" and to

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232 Veronica de Osa, The Troubled Waters of the Amazon, (London: Robert Hale, 1990), 64.

work was implemented in the area.[233] While enticing the Indians to work for trade items often worked at first, once these items were obtained it became evident that the Indians were often a very reluctant work force. As in earlier centuries, force was used in order to get the Indians to continue to work since this was clearly cheaper than wage labour.[234] The rising price of rubber in the first years of the twentieth century may have intensified the use of violence in the rubber areas as the economic incentive to extract rubber increased.[235] As well, the Aranas seemed to

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233 Consul Fuller to the Secretary of State, July 1, 1912 writes: "The cost of labor in this consular district is now so high that, in view of the necessarily expensive freights to Europe, it is hard for Peruvian rubber to compete except in times of high market price abroad...any movement tending in the least to increase labor costs would thus meet with little or no local support." He is referring to the potential changes to the debt peonage system prevalent in the area (of which the atrocities against the Indians were a grotesque modification) as a result of the investigations of the Putumayo atrocities. While this report is a few years after the initial investigations, the high price for wage labour in the area was common throughout the rubber era due to the isolation of the area and the expense of bringing in supplies. Thus the development of "alternative" labour systems. Confidential report no. 13, Slavery in Peru. 15.

234 The wage labourers for the Peruvian Amazon Company were paid anywhere between 50 to 200 soles (1 sol= 2 shillings) with most receiving 50-70 soles per month. Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 140-142. According to Marín, La explotación del caucho en el Perú, in 1910 in Iquitos a kilogram of rice cost .21 soles, of sugar .54 soles, of beans .65 soles, in outlying areas like the Alto Purus (or the Putumayo) the same items cost 2.0, 2.0 and 1.0 soles per kg. respectively. It is clear that all things sold by the Peruvian Amazon Company to its employees or the Indians were considerably marked up, resulting in debt peonage for many of the "white" employees and virtual slavery for the Indians.

235 Although the type of rubber extracted in the Putumayo was not as high a quality as that extracted from the Hevea trees in Brazil, and therefore never received as high a price, the general price of rubber increased in the first few years of the twentieth century from a ten year high of 4.3 pence/lib. in 1900, dipping to 3.6 p/lib. in 1902 and steadily rising to a high of 6.0 p/lib. in 1906 and dropping again to 3.0 p/lib. in 1908 on the London market. The high price for 1906 corresponds to the preparation of the prospectus of the Peruvian Amazon Company for the London market. José Marín, La explotación del caucho en el Perú, 84.

try to push production between 1904 and 1907 in order to enhance the prospectus which helped them become the Peruvian Amazon Company in 1907, thanks to British capital.[236] Since section chiefs were paid a percentage of the value of rubber extracted in their area, it was worth their while to motivate the Indians to collect as much as possible. Unfortunately for the Indian the most common means of "motivation" was the use of force.

An often cited political reason which exacerbated the "get rich quick" mentality which in turn helped create violence was the fact that the Putumayo region was a disputed territory between Colombia and Peru. Under a modus vivendi signed in 1903, the area was to be vacated by both Peruvian and Colombian authorities. The Aranas used the compliance of the Colombians to move into the area, with the help of Peruvian soldiers. Since the area was in a political limbo, it would seem reasonable that rights of possession were tenuous, if not not-existent. This insecurity may have contributed to the use of violence to speed the exploitation of the area until some sort of political agreement was made.

The idea that the area was so isolated that it was impossible for the authorities of either country to monitor, prevent and eventually capture

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236 The production figures based on the Custom house receipts at Iquitos from the Putumayo area were a low of 15,863 kilograms in 1900 (a time when smaller Colombian companies were still prevalent in the area and did not need to go through the customs in Iquitos) rising to 201,656 kgs. in 1903, 343,499 kgs. in 1904, 470,592 kgs. in 1905, 644,897 kgs. in 1906, 627,661 kgs. in 1907 and then dropping to 489,016 kgs. in 1908 and declining steadily to 236,448 kgs. by 1911. It is impossible to speculate how much rubber was smuggled out without going through customs or how much the decline of production was due to a decrease in available caucho trees (since they were destroyed when tapped). It is interesting, however, that many of the worst atrocities occurred during the times of highest production. Casement, Putumayo Blue Book, 158.

the criminals of the atrocities is of some interest. It is often stated in the official inquiries of the Putumayo atrocities that few of the "alleged" criminals were apprehended due to the lack of control of the area by the authorities. It is interesting to note, however, that when the Casa Arana was establishing itself it recruited the use of Peruvian soldiers and it had at least the consent, if not the support of the local government. It seems that the authorities could make their presence felt, albeit in a limited capacity, when they really wanted.

In addition, it is quite clear that the local government and populace did not appreciate the scrutiny they were receiving from the international community or their own national government. Conflicts of interest and corruption were rampant in the area. Government officials were often paid little or nothing and made money by involving themselves in the local business, rubber. The justice of the peace for the whole Putumayo basin, Manuel Torrico, was an employee of the Peruvian Amazon Company, "a clear proof that the local authorities had no real intention to bring about an improvement in the state of things on the Putumayo."[237] The Aranas and their associates were among the "wealthiest and most influential men in this part of Peru, and in fact in the whole country."[238]

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237 Confidential Report No. 19, "Labor Conditions in the Putumayo Region", American Consul Stuart J. Fuller to the Secretary of State, July 15, 1912, in Slavery in Peru, 24.

238 Confidential Report no. 13, Consul Fuller to the Secretary of State, July 1, 1912, in Slavery in Peru, 14. The report continues: "An indication of the state of local public opinion in regard to these men (Arana and his associates) is to be found in the Iquitos attitude toward Pablo Zumeta (sic), the moving spirit in the Peruvian Amazon Co., who is still under indictment and for whose arrest a warrant was at one time issued. He is in enjoyment of most of the local honors, vice alcalde (vice mayor of the municipality), vice president and acting head of the chamber of commerce (an influential organization), president of the benevolent society, etc., to all of which he was elected subsequent to his exposure. He is well respected in the town and stands high, the charges

It is clear that the majority of the public, despite their knowledge of the "alleged" atrocities, chose to ignore them. According to Consul Fuller:

> ...for a full comprehension of the existing situation it is necessary to examine into the general labor situation throughout this part of Peru. An important factor in this phase of the situation is found in the ancient, deep-rooted, and almost universal attitude of the Peruvians, who, while they may not approve of cruel and inhuman treatment, generally regard the Indians as placed here by Providence for the use and benefit of the white man and as having no rights that the white man need respect.
>
> This attitude of the people has found concrete expression in the universal system of peonage, an old institution, well established, recognized by law, and which has come to be the basis on which the rubber business (the sole industry of trans-Andean Peru) almost entirely rests...and has led to the establishment of what is virtually a slave trade.[239]

Later in the same report, Consul Fuller notes that many businessmen were afraid that "too real and serious investigation" into the conditions of the Putumayo may lead to the "exposure of the peonage system in general" and disrupt the labour situation and existing credit system, "with heavy resultant losses", and would "constitute a death blow to the rubber industry in Peru...."[240] The atrocities, therefore, were much more than the result of a few "deviant" monsters. They were a fact of a larger societal psyche and system of exploitation. A psyche and system based on a largely economic view of the world: a view that looked upon work and wealth in very different terms than those of the native Indians, and a view that perceived the Indian as a savage devoid of all the

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under the shadow of which he rests being entirely disregarded." 14. Julio C. Arana, himself, became a senator in the national assembly of Peru in 1923.

[239] Confidential Report no. 13, Fuller to Sec. of State, Slavery in Peru, 14.

[240] Ibid., 15.

trappings of civilization, especially the desire to "work" and be "productive".

Due to these contrasting views, this system, as it became manifest in the Putumayo, demanded the use of force and terror, which interests Michael Taussig most in his treatment of the Putumayo atrocities. While basically seeing a dynamic between "civilization" and "wildness" interacting through the use of force, terror and domination, he sees the use of "debt" to get the Indians to work as an illusion, an "appearance" based on the paradox that it could be paid back by the debtor's body, that is his sweat or blood.[241] As the debt held no real power or meaning for the Indians it was their bodies that were held as collateral and the only way to do this was through the use of force and terror. Taussig is very interested in the images of savagery and terror that informed the whites' own psyche that added to their use of terror against the Indians, and most of his book is concerned with the processes of healing that Indians have developed to deal with domination of the whites, particularly since the 1960s.

The use of terror is a fascinating and complex factor in the relation between Indian and white in the Putumayo. Taussig recognizes its importance but deals little about the cultural reasons behind the necessity of terror. That is, why did the Indians not want to work rubber and therefore have to be forced? Taussig's emphasis on "wildness" is instructive but it is too vague when one seeks to answer this question.

At least a part of the answer, and I believe an important part, lies in the different conceptions and relations each people had toward the world they lived in. Rather than seeing the world distinctly separated

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241 Taussig, Shamanism, 65.

between the material and spiritual - leading one to certain ideas concerning one's relation to land (i.e. there to be exploited) and labour (as a means to material gain) - as the caucheros did, the Indians' view was and is much more holistic. Economic motivation was the driving force for the cauchero, and was linked to his idea of how the world worked and his place in it. This helps explain why most serious explanations of the atrocities are based on economic arguments - written by whites, this is what they see as the most important factors at work. The Indian world view, developed within a far different environment and informed by a culture that had evolved in that environment, did not match the "civilized" view. It would be interesting to compare the Indian view of the atrocities, probably passed from generation to generation verbally through story and myth and couched in their own and, most likely, very different cultural language. To the Indian maintaining a balance with the physical world was inextricably linked with maintaining a balance with his spiritual world, the two were inseparable. An environment which precluded the accumulation of material goods by individuals, bred instead systems of reciprocity and community interdependence. When one's ancestors were often thought of and seen as animal or even plant "spirits", one's relationship to the physical world becomes much more intimate than purely economic. In short, very different world views lead, in the circumstances of the Putumayo and elsewhere in the New World since Columbus, to clashes of irreconcilable world views. A failure to comprehend the Indians' world view - to use Tzvetan Todorov's terminology, a failure to seek and gain knowledge of the "other" - or at least a failure to understand the Indians beyond one's desire to exploit

them, lead to violence and disaster.[242] Unfortunately, the "conquest" of the Indians continues.

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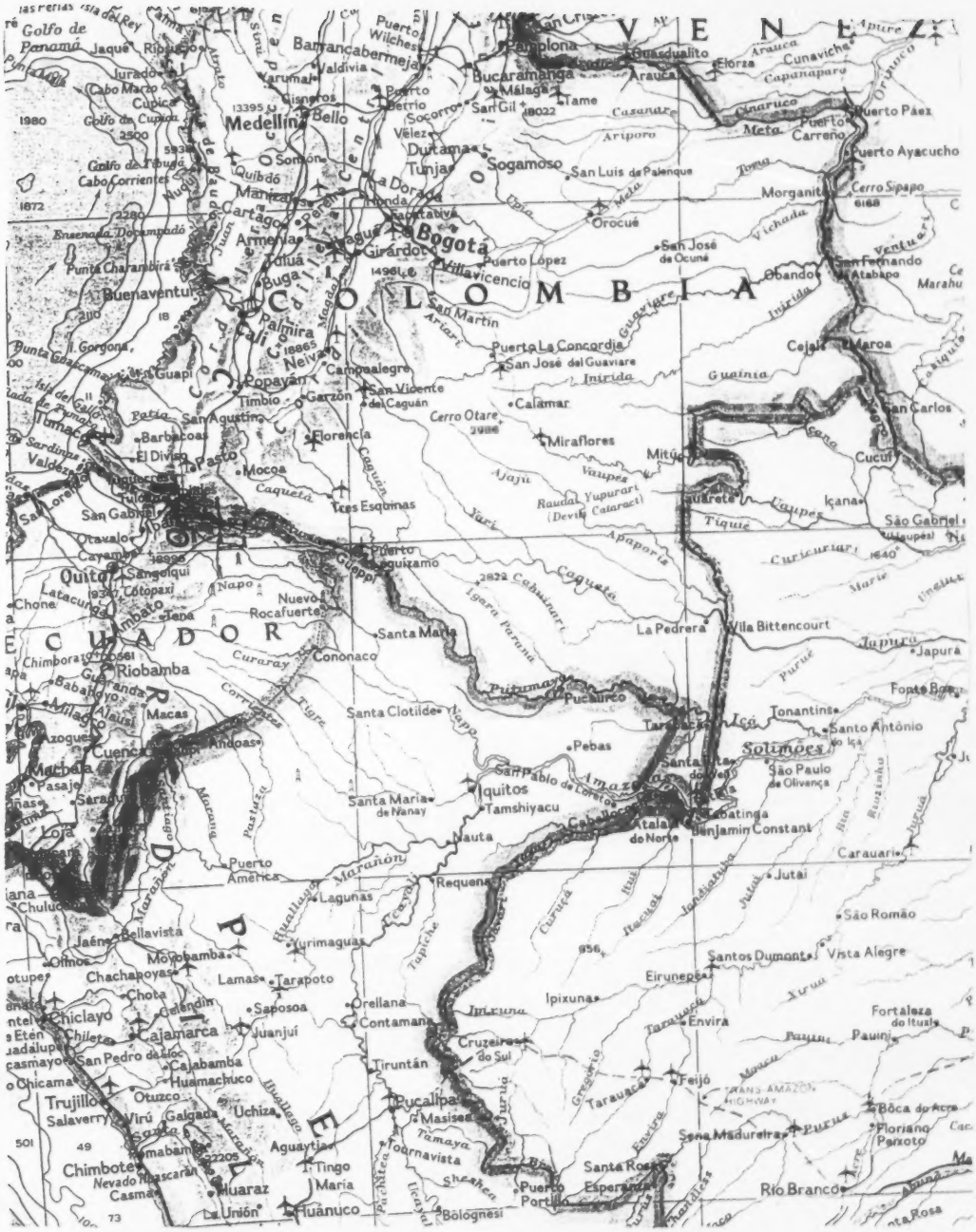
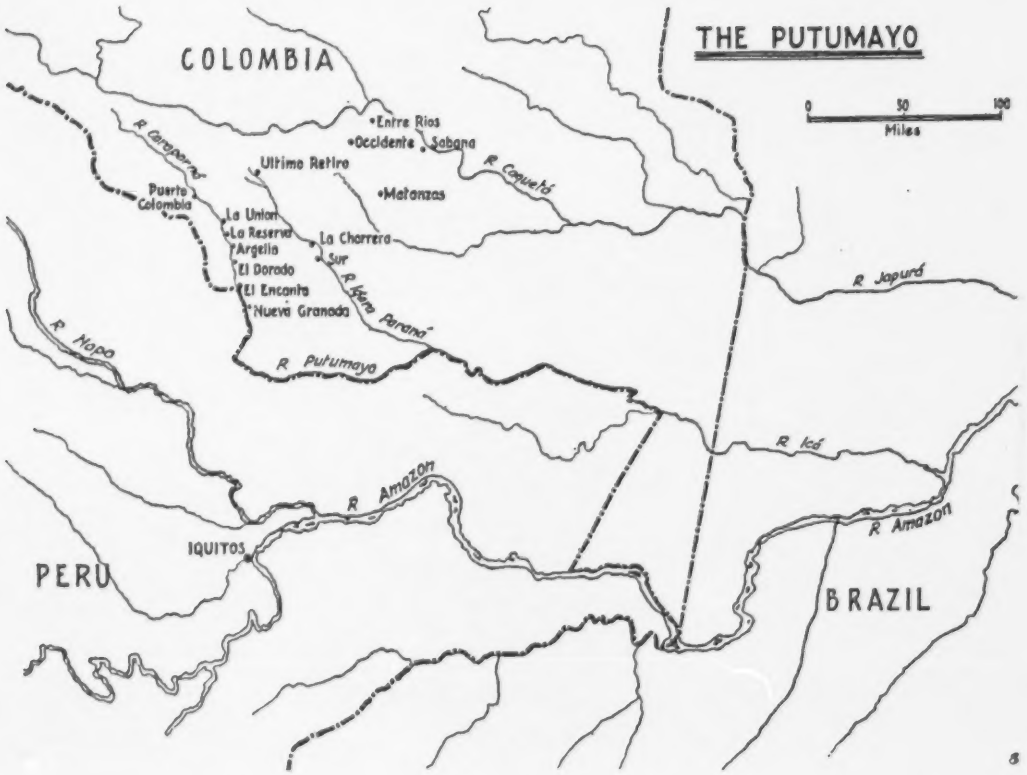
242 Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1984.)

MAPS

Map 1. Amazon Basin
Source: Brian Inglis, Roger Casement. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973) 157.



Map 2. Upper Amazon region.
Source: National Geographic Society Map, South America, 1972.



Map 3. The Putumayo Region
Source: Brian Inglis, Roger Casement. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973) 170.

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